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## Abstract

### The Death of William Golding: Authorship and Creativity in *Darkness Visible* and *The Paper Men*

Stephen G. Hardy

In the seventies and eighties William Golding was deeply responsive to the critical, anti-authorial ethos that followed the publication of Roland Barthes's "La mort de l'auteur" (1968). In *Darkness Visible* (1979) and *The Paper Men* (1984) he investigates means by which to reaffirm authorial presence. Working through paradox, he performs the authorial death in these novels, and establishes language's inadequacy as a means of conveying absolute meaning, authorial "vision," truth or revelation. Having done so he nonetheless gestures towards the divine, towards the possibility of a vatic communication. In this manner the novels work upon principles of contradiction and collapse. What remains is a discourse of hope, promise, desire, without means of substantiating such optimism. Thus Golding might be said to have practiced a form of *negative theology*, and to have anticipated in this respect some recent trends in literary theory.

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**The Death of William Golding:**  
Authorship and Creativity in  
*Darkness Visible* and *The Paper Men*

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Stephen G. Hardy

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Aug. 23, 2004

## Prologue

### Text and Betrayal

But what is to become of all these diaries, I asked myself yesterday. If I died, what would Leo make of them? He would be disinclined to burn them; he could not publish them. Well, he should make up a book from them, I think; & burn the body. I daresay there is a little book in them: if the scrapes & scratches were straightened out a little. God knows.

*Virginia Woolf's diary: March 20, 1926<sup>1</sup>*

From the disorder of a sprawling diary Virginia Woolf imagines a leaner text, a condensed record of self, a purer “life” to be made manifest upon her death. That the posthumous memoir would be further removed from direct experience (the life-as-lived which the diarist purportedly seeks to capture) does not concern her, so long as the “scrapes and scratches” are corrected, that the diary’s imperfect body is distilled and disposed of. Priorities evident here are more or less on display in all autobiographical efforts, fictional or otherwise. Always concerned to write her mind upon the page, to render in word the minutiae of a day’s impressions, Woolf nonetheless subjected the tenuous meanings of daily experience to a relatively severe process of artistic revision: the determining subject of her novels seeks control over indeterminate “reality,” the quick of quotidian life is forsaken for the polished stasis of literary form. In a profoundly inclusive sense she will privilege the “life” over life, art over experience. The result is a legacy of work as virtuosic and original as any in twentieth-century English literature. But for Woolf and others – and particularly for William Golding, the subject of this study, whose career emerged from the world war Woolf chose not to live through – the deferral of life to art will evoke a spectre of

mortification peculiar to the modern author, a threat to artistic selfhood, the beginnings of an authorial death.

In William Golding's ninth novel, *The Paper Men* (1984), famous author Wilfred Barclay writes the memoir of his later life while consulting twenty-five years of journal papers. Like Woolf in the epigraph above, Barclay wants to burn his diary, along with all his papers, once his brief autobiography is finished. Also like Woolf, Golding associates the memoir's completion with the writer's death, for having told his story Barclay dies instantly, murdered in mid-sentence by his would-be biographer, Rick L. Tucker. Woolf conflates death with the perfection of her written life. The body may perish along with the diary that attended its growth and decline, for her investment lies in the well-wrought text. Golding also places textual and biological selves into separate categories. But here critical differences between each author's assumptions begin to emerge. The commonly understood progression from death to published life-writing is reversed in Golding's case. Woolf foresees how her passing might lead to the release of an abridged diary, whereas Golding reveals how the written life might lead to the author's death. Woolf's message is clear and can be paraphrased: "In the event of my death, I would like my life to be published." Golding's message is quite different: "In the event of my life being written, I will die." For while he wished to appear insulated from contemporary influences, both literary and critical, Golding was very much a part of his times, and a part of the postmodernist and poststructuralist period which gave witness to the subject's disappearance, the overthrow of the biography for the thanotography. To be known solely through



language, through cultural codes, through *paper*, was for Golding a form of extinction, a fatal concession to materialism and darkness.<sup>2</sup>

In the juxtaposed texts, a fragment from Virginia Woolf's diary, and a quasi-autobiographical novel by William Golding, the authors negotiate the terms of their passing, arrange with posterity the usage of their written remains, test their authorial wills against the most implacable of determinants, their own deaths. "God knows," shrugs Woolf, resigned to uncertainties inherent in posthumous arrangements, yet feigning disinterest as well. Perhaps only "God knows," but Woolf gets the ball rolling – the diary passage, after all, is not precisely what it seems. Her ostensibly idle meditation is in fact a set of instructions, left where she knew it would be found after her death. Faithful as ever to her wishes, Leonard Woolf *did* extract the "little book" from her journal, publishing it twelve years after her suicide as *A Writer's Diary* (1953). Thus Virginia was partially successful in arranging the fate of her diary after her death. But he did not destroy the journal according to her instructions (and she suspected he would be disinclined to do so) – this, of course, is now published in full regardless of her reservations.

William Golding's *The Paper Men* also contains an oblique statement of will, directed this time to scholars of his work. Rick L. Tucker desperately wants to be appointed Barclay's biographer, a proposition repugnant to Barclay himself, and in the sordid and internecine struggle that ensues Golding's imperative is made clear: *do not write my biography*. *The Paper Men* is a codicil communicated through literary rather than legal means, and as such it has proven

surprisingly effective. Golding's *will* asserts itself through *The Paper Men*, despite his death, and despite conventional attitudes that the dead author's history belongs to the public domain. Ten years have passed since his death in 1993, yet this winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature (1983), the Booker Prize for *Rites of Passage* (1982), and author of *Lord of the Flies* (1954), one of the most widely read novels of the twentieth century, still has no published biography, official or otherwise. The absence of a biography, it is fair to assume, is due at least partially to *The Paper Men*. Scholars interested in uncovering the personal details of Golding's life must first contend, not intellectually, but personally, with the appalling spectre of Rick L. Tucker, a critic stripped of impersonalism, dignity and academic disinterestedness. Vladimir Nabokov cast similar aspersions upon the critical establishment and its encroachments upon the private life of the author in *Pale Fire* (1962). As in *The Paper Men*, the critic-figure in *Pale Fire* is criminalised, the author victimised, and the authorial identity hijacked by the academic. The mad *émigré*, Kinbote, narrates a lengthy exegesis on the work of John Shade – a poet whom he has murdered. Yet *Pale Fire* did not dissuade academics from investigating and commenting on Nabokov's private life.<sup>3</sup> The fantastical Kinbote, after all, is hardly representative of the literary-critical establishment, whereas the portrayal of Rick L. Tucker, as will be examined in the chapter on *The Paper Men*, hits more closely to home.

The life-writings of Woolf and Barclay survive their creators. Golding's diary also survives him. Plans are underway to publish the two-million word journal that he kept from 1971 until his death in 1993.<sup>4</sup> No doubt its publication

would be in accordance with Golding's wishes, and there is no known record that he wished, like Barclay, to keep private, or to dispose of his journal. But the tendency of writing to outlive the writer is of ominous import in *The Paper Men*. Here, the tenacious, written self supplants the living being, thus fulfilling Barclay's greatest fear, that he should be known at last as a *paper man*. He suspects this to be the case even while he lives.

*The Paper Men* is the culminating statement of a long period of crisis during which Golding felt himself in opposition not only to literary-critical institutions (and clearly the academic, Rick L. Tucker, is Barclay's chief antagonist) but also with "paper" itself, that is, with the determining forms of literature and language. At some point, many authors worry whether they are well served by their work, whether the literature laboured upon amounts in the end to a validation or negation of their private existence. The text acquires a new independence upon publication, reflective of the author (for better or worse), but unresponsive to his or her wishes, vulnerable to both critical reduction and an explosive array of readings divergent from the author's own. The problem is pronounced in the case of public success, or worse, literary canonisation. Considerable advantages accrue to the unknown writer (ignoring for a moment the well understood disadvantages). The aspirant is more a potential being than an actuality – potentially omnipresent because unlocatable, potentially omnipotent because unproven. But such advantages are recalled once the writer is "recognised." An emerging public persona overshadows the private self; evidence of a textually determined "author" unsettles the writer's sense of

unlimited growth. However received, the published and perhaps celebrated author is at once located and proven, established quite literally as a “phenomenon,” observable and finite in extension.

Thus sacrificial overtones enter into the self-references of many writers. Art overthrows the artist, gaining its life in exchange for that of its creator. The meditative life (the writer’s life) becomes, as Italo Calvino says of his Mr. Palomar, a means by which one “learns to be dead.”<sup>5</sup> The narrator of Woolf’s *Orlando* finds herself in a dilemma when she attempts to portray Orlando in the act of writing: “Life, it is agreed by everyone whose opinion is worth consulting, is the only fit subject for novelist or biographer; life, the same authorities have decided, has nothing whatever to do with sitting in a chair and thinking. Thought and life are as poles asunder.”<sup>6</sup> Woolf’s tone is ironic, but she was clearly troubled by the apparent nihilism inherent in the writer’s withdrawal. If one’s activity, says Orlando’s biographer again, is nothing other than to “sit and think, then we may conclude that he or she is no better than a corpse and so leave her.”<sup>7</sup>

Solitary in practice, and solipsistic in the magnitude of its engagement, the writing vocation might begin with the belief (accurate to a point) that literary production will be an intensification of life, a vindication of selfhood. But a commitment as vast, for example, as Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past* cannot but entail a loss of things present; which is not to propose a taxonomy of being, to attribute more or less reality to literary or other types of activity, but only to recognise that a period of crisis and disenchantment is registered in the works of many writers. Jorge Luis Borges offers one of the finest articulations of

this disenchantment in the short meditation, “Borges and I.” Of himself, he says, “I willingly admit that he has written a number of sound pages, but those pages will not save *me*, perhaps because the good in them no longer belongs to any individual, but to language itself, or to tradition.” The passage references an anterior assumption, one entertained, perhaps, by Borges in earlier days, namely, that good writing *would* save him. But in time literature reveals itself as a false means of salvation: “Beyond that I am doomed – utterly and inevitably – to oblivion, and fleeting moments of myself will be all of me that survives in that other man.”<sup>8</sup>

Writers build houses in which they cannot live. Or if they can be said to inhabit the text, it is as ghosts only, half-present and impotent to alter the language-edifice by which they are known. Thus the author looks to the next project, a renewal of inspiration and creative vitality. But each work ossifies in turn, reductive and imperfect in its delegation of artistic selfhood. The text stops growing, and by implication, ceases to live: “No sooner does the ink dry than it repels me,” says Beckett, as if he would sustain forever the fluency of heightened creativity. Inspired openings birth only closures – the moment of creative conception, a psychological state fluent with possibility, acquires a lapidary permanence upon the page.

In April of 1980, in a lecture given in Hamburg called “Belief and Creativity,” Golding spoke of his own uncertain sense of authorial life:

For a quarter of a century now the person you see before you has gone through a process of literary mummification. He is not entirely a human being; he is a set book. Of course that is a great personal benefit but not without its drawbacks. The creature lives

and breathes like some horrible Boris Karloff figure inside his mummy wrappings which year by year are tightened. A statue, an image stands in his place.<sup>9</sup>

It is not surprising that Golding, a life-long, amateur Egyptologist, would liken literary fame to a process of insidious mummification. He does not, however, speak directly of pharaonic funeral rites, but of their cheapened and sensationalised Hollywood image. His own career, he suggests, is subject to similar diminishments. But the metaphor resonates in his hands. Ancient priests, like professors of literature ministering to the Author, vivisect and embalm the fallen demigod, removing vital organs, wrapping the body in bands white like paper. Egyptian kings rest in structures of mammoth stillness, as permanent as mountains, as abiding as the institutionalized memory of once-living authors. Pharaonic priests sought release through the radical formalisation of death; rarefaction was believed to follow an assiduously pursued reification, the absolute dark of pyramidal chambers set the scene for solarisation. The dialectic so pronounced in Egyptian death-rituals is analogous (fancifully, at least) to some forms of literary-critical practice, and is evident to a degree in all religious practice, all cultural rites, even all art. On inspection, the duality of spirit and body, apotheosis and death, Author and text, simplifies into the secular terms, *meaning* and *form*. The literary author holds a position analogous in modernity to that of the Egyptian demigods in antiquity. Much effort is put into the preservation and dissemination of the literary text so that it, and its author, will live forever.

The global success of *Lord of the Flies* garnered for Golding a mixed reward: literary immortalisation, and the permanent inability to be anything other than the widely recognised author of *Lord of the Flies*. Golding's institutionalisation began at the *outset* of his career,<sup>10</sup> and was fully established by the early sixties, before he had reached the halfway-point of what would be his completed *oeuvre*. By the 1970s he often exhibited iconoclastic tendencies towards the iconic self, pressing against the insides of the textual sarcophagus, one displaying a beautiful, but inevitably fixed and false image of the being inside.

The Hamburg lecture, "Belief and Creativity," is included in Golding's second book of essays, *A Moving Target* (1982). In contrast to an earlier collection of prose, *The Hot Gates* (1965), where the newly famous Golding seems willing to assume a role comparable to that of cultural "shaman," the essayist of *A Moving Target* takes little for granted regarding the privileges of authorship. Frequently in the early writings, references to the visionary abilities of the author are made with relatively little self-consciousness. In "The Hot Gates," Golding recounts a visit to historic Thermopylae (literally, the "hot gates") where the Spartan captain, Leonides, and three hundred of his men, held the pass for three days against a vast Persian army before being overcome. He explores the site on foot, and makes the kind of contact with history he had hoped for:

Suddenly, the years and the reading fused with the thing. I was clinging to Greece herself. Obscurely, and in part, I understood what it had meant to Leonides when he looked up at the cliffs in the dawn light....

It was then – and by the double power of imagination and the touch of rock, I was certain of it – that the brooding and desperate thinking of Leonides crystallized into one clear idea....<sup>11</sup>

Golding is transported. He views the scene through Leonides' eyes. The Spartan captain knows he has been betrayed, that the Persians have breached a hidden pass; he sees the glitter of arms behind the cliff trees, and knows the sacrifice required of him and his men. The vision comes to an end:

I came to myself in a great stillness.... I knew now that something real had happened here. It was not just that the human spirit reacts directly and beyond all argument to a story of sacrifice and courage.... It was also because way back at the hundredth remove, that company stood in the right line of history.<sup>12</sup>

The narrative depends on notions of *contact*, with the rock, with reading, with history, with the lingering energies of the past, and the implication is always that he is a privileged medium, a rare shaman, an oracle. His account of the writing of *Lord of the Flies*, and particularly of the scene where Simon confronts the pig's head, also reads as vatic testimony: "It was at this point of imaginative concentration that I found that the pig's head knew Simon was there. In fact the Pig's head delivered something very like a sermon to the boy; the pig's head spoke. I know because I heard it."<sup>13</sup> The pig's head spoke to *both* the Christ-figure, Simon, and to Golding; the author's purpose then becomes that of Simon's, to deliver the news, to bear witness; and like Simon, there is a risk that the author will be sacrificed for his message.

Golding was susceptible to periods of intense imaginative absorption. He describes such moments in several essays, "The Hot Gates," "Egypt from my Inside," and "Digging for Pictures," for example. Little else can explain the



power of his fiction, or the strange discrepancy between the grounded, conventional voice of his prose, and the *new* voice audible in the novels. He frequently defended the validity of such experiences, and tried through his career to define them adequately. However, the issue was perhaps never whether such experiences are true in themselves, but whether they afford access to the *truth*: the truth about Leonides' thoughts at Thermopylae, about the nature of Neanderthals, the construction of cathedrals, about good and evil, God and humanity.

By the 1970s, Golding's thinking about authorship had evolved considerably. He was less willing to promote the romantic image of the prophet-persona. The title, *A Moving Target*, identifies a thread of thematic coherence within an otherwise disparate collection of prose (travel pieces, essays on journal writing, English cathedrals, novel writing, and his acceptance speech for the Nobel prize). The author is hunted and besieged, preoccupied with evasive strategies in response to various threats: attempted critical assassination, the ossification of fame, and more general forms of impending inertia: the passage of time, old age, biological death. Most importantly, a moving target is a *living* target, dynamic rather than static, quick rather than still. Everywhere Golding insists he remains a growing, changing, indeterminate and unpredictable being, despite having fallen from fashion in the seventies, despite having been packaged and massively distributed as a curriculum requirement around the world, and despite being declared by literary-theory to be a textual entity *in toto*, devoid of originary powers or generative capacities.

Everywhere in *A Moving Target*, Golding evokes the notion of his death and then denies it. The pattern is integral to several of the essays, and to his later fiction as well. Bitterly, he recalls a graduate student who wished him for a thesis subject, despite her supervisor's recommendation that she write on Dr. Johnson's circle of acquaintances: "She was not going to write a thesis on anything as dull as a dead man. She wanted fresh blood. She was going out with her critical shotgun to bring home the living." But to be made a *subject* is to succumb to the critical shotgun, to be hung in the arid halls of literary history before one's time:

I wrote back at once saying that I agreed whole-heartedly with her professor. I was alive and changing as live things do. She would find someone who had known Dr Johnson a most agreeable companion who would not answer back and who would always stay where he was until wanted. She could guarantee filling him with a shower of critical small-shot at any time *she* wanted. But as for me, I am a moving target.<sup>14</sup>

The haunting is recurrent. In another essay he remarks on a letter from a much younger student: "My image as author of a set book goes near to solidifying my public self into a statue. The other day a little boy wrote to me and said, 'It is a fine thing to be able to write to an author while he is alive. If you are still alive will you answer the following questions?'"<sup>15</sup> Golding opens his lecture to the Hamburg academics by declaring that he is indeed alive, though the qualifications distract him:

It gives me particular pleasure – I might say peculiar pleasure – to address you today in Germany, home of exact scholarship, because it was a German reference book which announced my death in 1957. The announcement was premature but of course no more than that. Mark Twain, on a similar occasion, remarked that the report of his death was exaggerated. I do not know whether I can claim to be as lucky as he was.<sup>16</sup>

Further on he is more assertive: "I am still alive; and today it is my purpose to peer out of my wrappings and speak out of a centre which for all the impediments of bandages has gone on living and changing. It is my hope that some of what I say will be displeasing to some people."<sup>17</sup>

The monster stirs, emerges among the critics as a living voice, only to be suppressed again as each utterance is reclaimed by language and literary history – transformed, that is, into the white wrappings that bind the mummy. *Darkness Visible* (1979) and *The Paper Men* (1984), the two novels which are the focus of this study, are demonstrations in the art of futility and failure, graspings towards the sacred reach, distress signals delivered through a broken medium. In each novel, language's limitations are established, leaving only a lingering, insubstantial gesturing, a negative-discourse of hope, desire, promise, conviction. Golding's *failure* is a revelation in its own right, a paring down of discourse's representational, empirical and visionary pretences, an uncovering of a more intractable term: that literature is *only* an act of desire, a pressing, a promise forever pending, an inevitable human act. Though he believed in the theopneustic utterance, believed in the *scintilla deus*, within both author and text, he sought to uncover not their existence, but their *necessity*.

I have deliberately spoken of the authorial death from an authorial point of view and have ignored for the moment well known literary-theoretical issues concerning the "death of the author." Inevitably the poststructuralist debate will play an integral part in a study of authorship in Golding's novels. But the Barthesian programme of deauthorisation, and the discussions it has incited, is by

now a thoroughly-trodden field, one left fallow, as it were, for several years now. Far less attention has been given to the means by which authors themselves, would-be creators, *makers* of literature, proponents and practitioners of “inspiration,” “vision,” and “originality” (all concepts demystified and rejected by theory) negotiated their positions in the sixties, seventies, and eighties, within a critical ethos of anti-subjectivity and authocidal tendency. Many novelists – Calvino, Lessing, Auster, Gass, Updike, Waugh, Greene, Murdoch, to list a random few – would stand as candidates for such a study. But no other engagement with the spectre of authorial death was more violently polarized to the precepts of theory, or more profound in its discoveries, than that evident in the later works of William Golding.

## Introduction

### Stone and Theopneustia

The historian of religion might mutter about the [cathedral] stones that they were 'relics by contact'. But contact with what? It was *mana*, indescribable, unaccountable, indefinable, impossible *mana*. I think somewhat wryly how I stood the other day in the nave of Salisbury Cathedral, near a local cleric. He watched, with a kind of benevolent suspicion, as I held my hand close to the pillar, then moved it forward and back, like a man trying to find out if he has switched on the bars of an electric fire; but suspicion seemed to be winning over benevolence—so I went away.  
*William Golding*<sup>1</sup>

For his fifth novel, *The Spire* (1964), William Golding denied having researched what scant historico-architectural information exists regarding the construction of medieval cathedrals. Staring upwards at the transept of Salisbury cathedral, revering its gothic lines from the close, laying his hands against the stone pillars, Golding saw how it might have been built. "He just figured the whole thing out in his head," Frank Kermode reports ruefully: "Golding had almost to excess that qualification that the epic poets were urged to acquire and that modern novelists can to some extent ignore if they so choose, that is the ability to see or to figure out how complicated things work."<sup>2</sup> It has long been noted that Golding's was a literature of the tangible, his imaginative renderings vivid to the point of virtual reification, his thematic concerns concretised within a positivistic universe. More often than not, Golding claimed to "see" rather than to "figure out," attributing the remarkable physicality of his fiction – what one critic called his "quasi-scientific fiction"<sup>3</sup> – to the "warmth of the imagination"<sup>4</sup> rather than to applied observation.

But his ability to render sensuous and tactile reality served as counterpoint to religious agendas, and his faith in the supramundane capacities of the

imagination, however tried and qualified, never diminished throughout his career: “What is about to happen is a confrontation, not at all unusual in this author, between religion and rationalism,” announces Kermode again,<sup>5</sup> and it is through the sustained impasse of this confrontation that Golding’s art takes shape. The elusive numen of textual meaning is sought through pathways of optimal resistance, spirit through stone, the Word through the word. The epiphany sought for “requires both a grasp on the fact and a dangerous rhetorical effort. Rereading Golding’s novels one is repeatedly struck by the violence of that effort, its defiance of comfortable and conventional opinion.”<sup>6</sup> Increasingly through his career, Golding would bait the dialectical crisis between meaning and form, seeking to synthesise truth from antithesis, to sculpt the sublime from basalt, the hardest of stones used by the lapicides of ancient Egypt.<sup>7</sup>

Thus Golding was especially vulnerable to poststructuralist pronouncements regarding the death of the Author, not only because the high point of anti-authorial criticism (c. 1968-77) occurred at the mid-point of his career, and authorial assumptions implicit in his early novels were precisely those overturned by Barthes, Foucault, Derrida, de Man and others, but because his own artistic temperament turned upon traditionally conceived oppositions of meaning and form, freewill and determinacy – oppositions recapitulated in literary theory as creativity and criticism, *logos* and text. There was much of the theorist in Golding, though he yearned for the poetic mantle, and language was one of the “complicated things” he was prone to “figuring out.” Critical notifications pertaining to language’s independence from intention, the absence of genesis

traceable to the individual writer, and subsequent deauthorisation of the *auteur*, would impress themselves on Golding as logically *true*, but as belonging precisely to dilemmas of empirical form and meaning that had always impelled his art. Golding understood at an early stage impasses inherent to authorial issues that became increasingly apparent to literary theorists in decades following the publication of Roland Barthes's "La mort de l'auteur" (1968).<sup>8</sup> Given the ambivalent but persistent recourse to biography evident in even the most impersonalist of contemporary reading methodologies, commentators generally agree that the author has neither been adequately theorized nor successfully routed from the text.<sup>9</sup> Cogent arguments central to Barthes's essay – that text emerges from textuality, not individuality, that artistic origination (creativity) is philosophically untenable – have neither been rationally refuted, nor successfully incorporated into reading practice.<sup>10</sup> We remain unable to approach the singularity of artistic origin, and unable to devise conceptual models free of originary reference. In this gravitational field there are only points of suspension, poised coordinates between our bond to the author and our acknowledgement of the author's insupportable existence. Anti-authorial activity was perhaps inevitably stymied given the degree to which human concerns, and thus human sign systems, adhere to biographical structures – that is, the degree to which we are concerned with the individual, concerned about one another. Inevitable, too, in that the author's death falls within broader philosophical dialectics, the relation of the general to the specific, the inconceivability of creation *ex nihilo*, and conversely, the inconceivability of an infinitely extended aetiology. Thus a

decade's long unease in literary departments whenever the disowned acquaintance, the author, should re-appear. As Seán Burke has demonstrated in *The Death and Return of the Author*, even in the texts of those authors of anti-authorialism, Barthes, Foucault, and Derrida, the author is intractable, appearing at times most irrepressible when subjected to suppression.<sup>11</sup>

Drawn to paradox, Golding does not so much oppose as assimilate the authorial death in each of his later novels, *Darkness Visible* (1979), *The Paper Men* (1984), and less overtly, *To the Ends of the Earth* (1991), and *The Double Tongue* (1995). Initially, his appropriation of critical tenets for artistic ends appears to represent either that moment when his art fails, when the quasi-prophetic aspirations evident in the early work are overturned, or when the work achieves what Paul de Man would consider its most perfect authenticity, a freedom from naive romanticism and prophetic aspiration.<sup>12</sup> In actuality, by assimilating the authorial death Golding stakes for himself the tenuous middle ground native to Christian mythology from its inception, and arguably to western literature, for as Auerbach states in his *Mimesis*, the western canon constitutes a "struggle between sensory appearance and meaning... which pervades the Christian sense of reality from the beginning and, in truth, in its totality."<sup>13</sup> By enacting his own authorial death, by offering himself to the critical altar, Golding defines for himself a literary ground zero, the sacrificial and sacramental crux of human meaning. His strategy underscores redundancies implicit in declarations of the author's death, an author who arose from the ashes to begin with. By decentring the subject of his texts, by establishing the impossibility of authorised



writing while simultaneously gesturing towards a divine, trans-textual meaning, he situates authorship where it has perhaps been all along, within the pathetic or heroic space of promise, conviction, hope, faith, and desire.

Golding aligned himself with no particular religion, but given the persistent Christian mythos evident in his work it was perhaps natural that he should adopt the author's death as an artistic challenge. He was not the first to seek apotheosis through death, his own *apothades*, to descend to the underworld in hopes of re-emergence and transfiguration: "sit mihi fas audita loqui," reads the epigraph to his seventh novel, *Darkness Visible*: "May it be right to tell what I have heard." The epigraph comes from book six of Virgil's *Aeneid* where Aeneas descends into the underworld where shades abide in limbo. The invocation is made by Virgil (not Aeneas) whose voice rises unexpectedly in the midst of narration.<sup>14</sup> Prior to the publication of *Darkness Visible* Golding had been silent for over a decade, a hiatus beginning in 1968, the same year (incidentally) that Roland Barthes's "La mort de l'auteur" was published. His popularity at this time had reached its lowest ebb. *The Pyramid* (1967) was poorly received; *Lord of the Flies* (1954) was relegated from the campuses to the high schools; and those seeking social reform and a return to the garden had little use for this "pint-size" Jeremiah who kept insisting that botanic returns were impossible, that the garden was already infested by humanity itself. *The Scorpion God* (1971), a collection of short stories, underwhelmed reviewers, and seemed to many evidence of a tapering creative force. Silence and reclusion followed, and through the seventies critics thought to have seen his last.<sup>15</sup> But Golding returned with *Darkness*

*Visible* (1979), eventually adding six novels to the six he had published. He won the Booker Prize for *Rites of Passage* in 1982, and the Nobel Prize for literature in 1983. In 1988 he was knighted. In hindsight, the long hiatus at the midpoint of his career seems to mark the emptied space of authorial presence, an *oeuvre* decentred, a lacuna at the heart's core. Upon re-emergence, the author's death and return were permanently incorporated into Golding's art. Though they have not been acknowledged as such, the later novels provide literature with a cogent and impassioned response to criticism's authocidal endeavors. Golding has left a body of work where the severed alliance of criticism and literature is inscribed, where the mid-century collapse of the *belles-lettres* tradition is documented from the perspective of literature. Of Golding's confrontations with the textual death, none involved so deep a descent into authorial oblivion as his first, *Darkness Visible*.

### Death and Authenticity

... the fundamental movement of the literary mind espouses the pattern of a demystifying consciousness; literature finally comes into its own, and becomes authentic, when it discovers that the exalted status that it claimed for language was a myth. The function of criticism then naturally becomes coextensive with the intent at demystification that is more or less consciously present in the mind of the author.

Paul de Man<sup>16</sup>

In "Criticism and Crisis," and elsewhere in his writing, Paul de Man outlines the central terms of a literary progression from Romantic idealism to postmodern demystification. Golding's career demonstrates such a progression, though if the later novels are fully reflexive, wholly conscious of their contingent, mediated

nature, they are by no means emptied of hope for the ideal, or the divine.

Golding's literary *authenticity*, as de Man might call it, is in fact a practice in vatic failure, or a *negative theology*. None of Golding's later novels rests easy having attained what de Man refers to as literary authenticity, nor in their discovery that the "exalted status" of language claimed by Golding for his earliest novels was a "myth." Through an extended embrace of both postmodern tenets, and the desire to transcend textual mediation, the later novels meet the criterion of de Man's "authenticity," and transgress it at the same time. What keeps these works from being simple, postmodern concessions to the creed of *surface* – what Georg Lukács would label "bad faith"<sup>17</sup> – is that the will for meaning, the faith in divine inspiration, does not abate despite the novels' strong demonstrations of its futility.

Language fails, but the desire to communicate remains. Golding's first three novels, *Lord of the Flies* (1954), *The Inheritors* (1955), and *Pincher Martin* (1956) are virtually free of self-referential elements. These works are rare and relatively pure instances in later twentieth-century literature of the practice of impersonalist mythopeia and Aristotelian objectivity (that biographical accounts of Golding's wartime experiences would coalesce with our notions of *Lord of the Flies* resulted entirely from his own post-text exegesis). His fourth novel, *Free Fall* (1959), graduates toward self-reference through its use of the artist-figure as first-person narrator. But it is Golding's fifth novel, *The Spire* (1964), that stands as his first work fully conceptualised, in form and content, as a self-conscious novel. Jocelin is inspired, and officiates the construction of something glorious, a

prayer in stone. His dream will be realised, the cathedral spire he envisions will be built, but its undertaking will destroy all involved. The spire rises in tandem with the construction of the novel, and Jocelin's folly implicates the author whose creative endeavors, we assume, exact some comparable, personal cost, and whose inspiration, like Jocelin's, will only find purchase in profane soils. But does reflexivity in *The Spire* function in this way? Does the author truly partake of Jocelin's fate? The spire's creation destroys its creator, its gradual integration parallels Jocelin's disintegration. With the laying of each new stone Jocelin's body strains beneath the weight of his undertaking, his faith recedes, his sanity gives, his back bends and breaks. But the author of *The Spire* is never shown to be similarly vulnerable. Narrative proceeds with uniform composure, deterioration is represented but not performed, the remote and impersonalist author portrays Jocelin's fall with fingernail-pairing aplomb. In fact, the author's affiliation with Jocelin constitutes an evasive tactic. Through the act of representation, Golding configures his own metaposition in relation to the lesser visionary, Jocelin. Kinship between creators is established so as to affirm differentiation. The author eludes Jocelin's fate simply by being Jocelin's author, aloof and indemnified within transcendental categories. The spire's construction results in the death of Jocelin, not the death of the author.

Aspiring to the ineffable, *The Spire* traces the tapering capacities of language, marking that point where the linguistic grasp fails the sacred and excessive reach. But heaven's still above, and so is the author, whether or not Jocelin has lost his existential bearings. For many, *The Spire* appeared the

necessary end-point to Golding's fictive explorations of sacred themes because unlike earlier novels it establishes the failure of language: "*It's like the Apple tree!*" exclaims Jocelin in a state of manic incoherence, inspired but unaccommodated by language. Simile fails, meaning overflows linguistic containment, and the visionary is overthrown. But having assayed the limitations of language, Golding had one more move to make following *The Spire*, one that, in hindsight, seems necessitated by the Judeo-Christian teleology inherent in his religious paradigms. In *The Spire*, and to a lesser and more qualified extent, in *Free Fall*, Golding sacrificed the artist-figure to the vatic endeavor, but he was yet to undergo his own authorial death. Having taken shelter in the rarefied categories of authorial immanence for so long, his last bid for the revelatory could only be self-sacrificial in nature: it was time for an authorial incarnation, for *corpus auteur* to appear, constructed and dispersed within the profane textual space, without guarantee of an ensuing apotheosis. Both the Judeo-Christian progression, and the prevailing critical, anti-authorial temperament of the seventies demanded of Golding the authorial sacrifice. In *The Spire* language fails the still transcendent Author-God. In *Darkness Visible*, language does not fail, it takes over.

## Chapter One

### Darkness Visible (1979)

The concept of revelation, in the sense that something suddenly, with unspeakable certainty and subtlety, becomes *visible*, audible, something that shakes and overturns one to the depths, simply describes the fact... a thought flashes up like lightening, with necessity, unfalteringly formed – I have never had any choice... a depth of happiness in which the most painful and gloomy things appear, not as an antithesis, but as conditioned, demanded, as a necessary colour within such a superfluity of light.... This is my experience of inspiration; I do not doubt that one has to go back thousands of years to find anyone who could say to me 'it is mine also.'

*Friedrich Nietzsche*<sup>1</sup>

Golding's seventh novel, *Darkness Visible* (1979), is a difficult mixture of irony and earnestness, meant to impact like a seventh wave, meant to gesture, at least, towards the rending of a seventh veil, but aware of itself as an inadequate means of revelation. The novel lends itself to superlative description: it is Golding's longest, most densely wrought, and least understood work; socially and geographically, it is his most panoramic and abundant fictional excursion, his largest canvas, his most complete abandonment of the Aristotelian containment evident in many of his novels. Recurrent character-types from earlier works find teleological expression here: Matty, maimed and immaculate, emerging from the apocalyptic blitz fires of World War Two London, completes the progression of Golding's saint-figures, Simon from *Lord of the Flies*, Nathaniel from *Pincher Martin*. Beautiful Sophy, criminal mastermind and acolyte of the dark god Entropy, capable of child abduction, torture and pedicide in a state of absorbed sexual bliss, is Golding's opus rendering of human evil. And if the early novels can be said to have advanced a religious programme, then *Darkness Visible* marks its culmination and end point. Five more novels would follow, but as fictive

approximations to sacred testament they stand as codas only to the climax of *Darkness Visible*. If Golding had exploited, or taken for granted, the quasi-prophetic role of the author in the early years of his career, then he would take himself to task in *Darkness Visible*, assaying earnestly a vatic authenticity while exploring also the profane limitations of text and authorship.

At play in *Darkness Visible* is a complex metadrama where the author acknowledges moral culpability, establishes his own death through textual determinism, and struggles in spite of these determinisms to re-affirm a creative presence in the text. This return is signalled through the author's affiliation with Matty, a prophet in life and angel of light in death. The central characters of *Darkness Visible* are authorial self-representations, dialogic author-figurings by which Golding meta-dramatises his own function, moral nature, and presence within the text. To import a Bakhtinian vocabulary he may or may not have been concerned with, *Darkness Visible* works upon polyphonic principles, revealing a *heteroglossia* or plurality of voices traceable to a single subject. The highly populated narrative is the product of a sole, solipsistic consciousness, and what appears Golding's most socially far-ranging novel is, in fact, his most isolated, more so than *Lord of the Flies*, *To the Ends of the Earth*, or even *Pincher Martin*. After all, Martin's solipsistic ordeal on Rock All is observed *from the outside* by the omniscient narrator. In *Darkness Visible* all is contained and confined to the authorial consciousness. Characters corresponding to the novel's three parts – Matty, Sophy, and Goodchild – delegate contrasting aspects of the multi-figured author. As such, Golding is implicated at each point of the moral spectrum delineated by these characters: he partakes of Matty's saintliness, shares in

Sophy's culpability and damnation, joins in Goodchild's banal and blameless mediocrity. Furthermore, the author's investment in each character bears upon the question of his creative capacities. Unlike Goodchild, who is creatively stifled by the limitations of his nature, both Matty and Sophy are *movers*, initiators of events, purveyors of vision. But their "creative" abilities are of a radically distinct order, and in a literal sense Sophy is not creative at all. Associated with Manichaeian darkness, with matter rather than spirit, her apparent creativity is only a highly subtilised capacity for calculation. As an author-figure, she condemns Golding as one who merely reassembles materials at hand, as an *inventor* rather than a creator, as intelligent rather than inspired; she is a figurative confirmation of the Barthesian "death of the author." Matty, however, is an anomaly within Sophy's closed universe, a generative potential, a scintilla of demiurge within a network of physical contingency. Nominally, at least, Golding is endowed with creative potential so long as he can establish Matty as an emanation of selfhood, as a *living* product of his imagination.

But any assertion of a textual *scintilla deus* is bound to be more problematic than sound, more fanciful than theoretical, more religious than rational. Whether Golding's metadrama indicates a successful communion with Matty, a re-instatement of visionary abilities, is to an extent a moot point. The epistemological basis upon which such an affirmation might be made is already undermined by the novel itself; the text has already been found an inadequate medium for such purposes, incapable of vision and revelation. If the author signifies his unification with Matty, the resulting apotheosis can only be symbolic, and it is precisely the symbolic nature of language that



ensures its alienation from presence and divine meaning. What remains, as Golding well knows, is only a statement of belief, a conviction that some spark of inspiration can inhabit the dark matter of the novel.

### Books and Bicycles

We must produce *homo moralis*, the human being who cannot kill his own kind, nor exploit them nor rob them. Then no one will need to write utopias, satires or antiutopias for we shall be inhabitants of utopia as long as we can stay on the bicycle; and perhaps a little—not much, but a little—dull.

William Golding<sup>2</sup>

An understated metaphor in the fragments of Matty's diary serves to introduce questions of creativity and authorship in *Darkness Visible*.<sup>3</sup> Matty's bicycle – purchased at the behest of his attendant red and blue spirits, and used as transportation during his time as groundskeeper at Wandicott school – carries considerable symbolic and reflexive weight, though its significance is made clear chiefly through recourse to another of Golding's texts. In "Utopias and Antiutopias" (1977), an essay contemporary to the writing of *Darkness Visible*, Golding identifies flux and procession as qualities intrinsic to human structures. Social stability, he argues, is not indefinitely enforceable; change is not an entirely governable phenomenon, but an ontological imperative, a necessary adjunct to existence within the time-dimension. Thus utopian formulations (those of Plato, More, Voltaire, Wells) are flawed in proportion to their insistence upon impossibly static social states. By way of illustration, Golding evokes the image of a bicyclist, engaged in a process of motion, balance, adjustment and readjustment:

Consider a man riding a bicycle. Whoever he is we can say three things about him. We know that he got on his bicycle and

started to move. We know that at some point he will stop and get off. Most important of all, we know that if at any point between the beginning and the ending of his journey he stops moving and does not get off the bicycle he will fall off it. That is a metaphor for the journey through life of any living thing, and I think any society of living things.<sup>4</sup>

A simple illustration, the emblematic bicycle nonetheless resonates prolifically in *Darkness Visible*, on fictional and metafictional levels. Matty's death is underscored by the bicycle's breakdown, a symbolic disengagement with the space-time continuum, a cessation of forward momentum intrinsic to his being. Preparing to ride into Greenfield, he discovers that a tyre is punctured: "He drew in his breath with a hiss. The back tyre was flat" (240). The word "hiss" links the expiration of the tyre with his own expired lifespan: having discovered the flat tyre, he is knocked unconscious by Sophy's cohorts and left in the burning garage, soon to enact his final, sacrificial role as the kidnapped child's rescuer. The bicycle, called in this passage a "machine," takes its place among the novel's many disabled machines, a motif aligned with Sophy's conception of a mechanistic universe, subject to entropic ruin and devoid of regenerative potential. An association between Matty's body and bicycle, however, instates as well an opposition between rider and bicycle, between ghost and machine. Matty's physical being terminates in the fire at Wandicott's; his body, in fact, is a damaged and malfunctioning machine from the start, emerging as it does from a London blitz fire. Yet in opposition to Sophy's nihilistic materialism, Matty's physiological death gives way to resurrection; breakdown proves preparatory to apotheosis, an ascetic precondition to spiritual release. The "hiss" of Matty's breath proves not death's analogue, but its antithesis; his breath is drawn *in*, hinting at his role as divine afflatus within degenerative conditions. Thus at the novel's close, Mr.

Pedigree meets Matty as the spirit Windrove, a luminosity of wind, fire and light, and without his bicycle of course. Yet by this point, all *signified* spirit/body dualities (including the homologous author/text) have collapsed within the self-consciously mediated nature of signification itself. Matty's spiritual manifestation can only be read through filters of ironic detachment and epistemological uncertainty, for the text too has been declared a machine, a vehicle inadequate to the task of spiritual testimony.

Like Golding's bicyclist, narrative in *Darkness Visible* is bound to principles of forward momentum. Though the text is comprised of several, distinct narrative forms (Matty's diary; three or four narrators positioned behind different characters, incognisant of one another, limited to the perceptions of their respective characters) these forms never overlap chronologically (except in one critical instance to be examined later), but connect end-to-end forming a single temporal sequence. Part Two begins the day following the final events of Part One; Part Three is similarly linked to the ending of Part Two, despite the fact that each part introduces a new character and initiates a new story line. There is nothing remarkable about linear chronology in a novel, of course, unless it should be applied to a pastiche of narrative voices as in *Darkness Visible*. Matty's journal segments make this arrangement particularly conspicuous. While diary fragments in fiction often recount spans of time already traversed by the narrative proper,<sup>5</sup> Matty's diary segments retrace no other temporal ground, but stand as intercalations within the novel's timeline. Temporal linearity intrinsic to the diary (a form uniquely bound to real time) is extrapolated throughout the fictional enterprise.

Narrative transposes from one form to another, but events in *Darkness Visible*

proceed with calendric determinacy; the sparse entry headings of Matty's diary – 17/7/66, 25/7/66, 27/8/66, and so on – become the paradigm of chronological arrangement throughout the novel as a whole, sequential and mechanistic.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast, the narrator of Golding's earlier novel, *Free Fall* (1959), manipulates time freely, chronologically progressing and retrogressing, forsaking temporal imperatives in favour of associative logic. The work's narrator, Sammy Mountjoy, defends atemporal narration at the novel's outset: "For time is not to be laid out endlessly like a row of bricks. That straight line from the first hiccup to the last gasp is a dead thing."<sup>7</sup> Yet *Darkness Visible* follows precisely the temporal principles rejected by Mountjoy, laying its narrative sections one after another "like a row of bricks." For writing twenty years after *Free Fall*, his faith in the function of authorship lessened and his awareness of textual determinants heightened, Golding indeed intends to present the text of *Darkness Visible* as a "dead thing." The author's traditional trans-temporal capacities (practiced without self-consciousness in Golding's early career) are rescinded; text and narrator are subjected in *Darkness Visible* to various profanations, various deaths. Books throughout the text are objectified (itemised, that is, within Sophy's materialist cosmos), their gross physical properties emphasised, their *messages* de-emphasised: Matty's first "Bible, on Indian paper and in squashy leather, gave him no help" (52); his second bible in "wooden covers," found in the bargain bin of a used bookstore, "a whole store of frozen speech" (47); an alphabet and the Lord's prayer in a "hornbook" (47). Books undergo both sensuous and economic reifications: feeling that "every speck of dust" in his store "is made of lead,"

(194) Goodchild frets over book prices and dickers with his customers; the first sentence of Matty's diary draws attention to its origins in market economy: "I bought this book and a biro..." (86).

The text takes its place within the world of things, neither sacred nor revelatory, but bound like a bicycle to procession and forward momentum. The disabled bicycle, after all, is not the only mechanical breakdown analogous to Matty's death. The final sentence of his diary, written just prior to his demise, contains a portentous grammatical break: "When I woke up again [the spirits] had put me from them, and" (239). Golding would signify death through syntactic interruption again in *The Paper Men* (1984), a first-person account of the final years of famous author, Wilfred Barclay. The novel contains an implicit ontological proposition: if Barclay is in fact a *paper man*, as the work's title and themes postulate, then his death will be a textual event, a syntactic cessation perhaps. The novel ends, therefore, when Barclay spies his would be biographer, Rick Tucker, outside his window with a rifle: "Where the devil did Rick L. Tucker manage to get hold of a gu".<sup>8</sup> Barclay's biological death cannot be confirmed (nor can Matty's for that matter) but most certainly both Barclay and Matty suffer *paper* deaths. Matty's diary does not close (closure signifying contrivance, and potential continuation, for to close artfully is never a closure of art itself) but *breaks*, in mechanical and grammatical senses, and the writing subject (born of language) subsequently ceases to exist. At one point, while reciting scripture by memory, Matty becomes "stuck like a gramophone record": "21 And he said unto them—said unto them—said unto them—said unto them" (55). Matty's cherished bible cannot provide him with a genuine divine contact. Language, he learns, is of

the world; text, bicycle and body alike are fated to a common demise reserved for constituents of a materialist universe.

"The novelist is God of his own inner world," pronounces Golding in a lecture,<sup>9</sup> an ambiguous self-glorification once "inner" is taken into account: is it God of an inner world virulent with meaning and authority beyond its own borders? Or is it God hopelessly ensconced within the skull, God of nothing at all? In *Darkness Visible*, a book situated in the world denotes an author likewise earthbound and time-conditioned. The novel's single timeline signifies a single consciousness, a presiding principle of organization, able to coordinate disparate narrative strands, but itself bound at each stage to the perspectival limitations of the lone individual. What would typically fall within the categories of structure here assumes the tracings of sentience. The ordering of distinct narratives within a single chronology attests to a second order of narration, or a *signified author*, the conscious source of a Bakhtinian heteroglossia,<sup>10</sup> by no means monologous, but monistic nonetheless. Despite an abundance of characters and a geographic range extending beyond any other of Golding's novels, *Darkness Visible* reads ultimately as a solipsistic drama. The work postulates an authorial consciousness both unfigured and textually contained, neither in transcendent relation to the text, nor entirely accounted for through language. The dreamer is present through negations, a consciousness hemmed round with various prefigurings, a rendering *in absentia*. Necessarily so, for to depict both dream and dreamer, as Golding would do in *Pincher Martin* (1956), is to proffer the impossible conundrum of an *observed* solipsism – to gaze upon the idealist canvas is to subsume the framework of dreams, to become the dreamer in turn. Such an arrangement

postulates (not uncommonly) the transcendent subject, Roland Barthes's derisively termed Author-God. Following a decade of anti-subjectivist criticism, Golding is found contending in *Darkness Visible* with the terms of the Author's death, conceding much so as to better investigate alternative recourses to an authorial return. The author's absence in *Darkness Visible* is not synonymous with authorial transcendence. Golding's authorial strategy is similar in effect, but ultimately antithetical to the will-to-impersonality practiced by certain literary modernists. The radical externalisation of the transcendent Author becomes the total internalisation of the dreaming subject. The question then becomes not whether the book is sanctioned as an imaginative emanation from a higher consciousness, but whether life and subject can escape the imprisoning embodiment of the text itself.

#### Author and Persona

You are my God, my Life, my holy Delight, but is this enough  
to say of you? Can a man say enough when he speaks of you?  
Yet woe betide those who are silent about you! For even those  
who are most gifted with speech cannot find words to describe you.  
Saint Augustine<sup>11</sup>

It is [the novelist's] business to describe the indescribable. I prefer  
and at the same time fear the saying of St Augustine 'Woe unto me  
if I speak of the things of God; but woe unto me if I do *not* speak  
of the things of God.'

William Golding<sup>12</sup>

The dreaming author remains unfigured in *Darkness Visible*, but the novel as idealist platform is prefigured at every turn: "High walls, less penetrable than brick, than steel, walls of adamant lay everywhere between everything and everything," says the narrator, at this point detached from character-perspective. "Mouths opened and spoke and nothing came back but an echo

from the wall. It was a fact so profound and agonizing, the wonder is there was no concert of screaming from the people that lived with the fact and did not know that they endured it" (83). Sim Goodchild, bookseller and central character in Part Three, often expresses a sense of personal solipsism: "We're wrapped in illusions, delusions, confusions about the penetrability of partitions, we're all mad and in solitary confinement," (261) he exclaims, despairing to make sense of surrounding events. Borges's description of Herbert Ashe in "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" is aptly redirected towards Goodchild: "In life, Ashe was afflicted with unreality, as so many Englishmen are."<sup>13</sup> Goodchild's awareness of mediated existence is acute: "all he believed in as real, as deeply believed in, not as a second-class belief, was himself as the man said because he felt himself thinking that he felt himself thinking that he felt awareness without end" (200-201). He frequently appends the phrase "as the man said" to his statements, aware as he is to what degree his conceptual repertoire derives from a textual repository. As Donald Crompton observes, "[Goodchild] is cultured in the way of the world, living his life out amongst books, and has a strong literary turn of mind, though an entirely conventional one. All his responses, even at the deepest level, are conditioned by his reading."<sup>14</sup> Sim's is a paper existence, a mind templated by the printed word, over-burdened by philosophical inquiry, with each philosophical system proving equally inadequate to release him from a half-life of mediocrity and material determination. Habitually sceptical, he resists Edwin Bell's enthusiastic claims that the strange man Matty might be one to "pierce partitions," to negotiate a divine contact, to supersede matter and language. His mind mired in the din and detail of phenomenal reality, Goodchild knows



only textuality, not creativity. In the figure of Sim Goodchild, solipsistic consciousness and an intertextuality without referential contact are joined in a single category.

Goodchild functions as nexus between narrator and character, between author and fiction. He speaks for the authorial condition; he is a predominant voice in the dialogic range, and he makes for a good starting point in exploring the author's relation to Sophy and Matty. *Darkness Visible* is divided into three parts: the first focuses on Matty (and is entitled "Matty"), the second on Sophy (entitled "Sophy"), and the third on bookstore owner, Sim Goodchild (entitled "One is One"). Each character delegates a different point on the Manichaeian, moral spectrum, with Matty positioned towards the Light, Sophy towards Darkness, and Sim precisely in the middle, dogged and humdrum representative of the moral majority. His first name, Sim, is significant. His bookstore contains Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation*, and he is himself a denizen of the phenomenal world, which in Manichaeian terms is a *simulacrum* of the real ("the real" being Darkness and Light in their respective, unmixed states). He is the assimilation of Darkness and Light, not quite Simon, the Christ-figure of *Lord of the Flies*, nor wholly homophonous to *sin*. *Sim* is combinatory: *Sophy in Matty*, similar in some ways to all of the characters (because in the middle) and similar as well to the author whose character renderings span the moral spectrum. Kevin McCarron speculates in *The Coincidence of Opposites* that Sim's name references his similarity to other characters, but does not note how similar he is to his author.<sup>15</sup> Both Golding and Goodchild are aged 67 years in 1978, both are veterans of the second world war, and are married with two children of either sex. They have

similar reminiscences regarding their fathers. Alex Golding, scientist, educationalist and Golding's father, is often described as the rationalist influence against which Golding rebelled. In an interview contemporary to *Darkness Visible*, however, Golding questions the mono-dimensional portrayal of his father as one solely committed to rationalist thought: "whether he actually believed what he said, I can't really tell because he was at bottom a very religious man and I think he was distressed by his own rationalism."<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Goodchild reflects upon his father's choice of window displays at the family bookstore: "His rationalist father had set out a skrying glass, the *I Ching* complete with reeds, and the full set of Tarot cards" (195).

No character comes so close to speaking as authorial proxy, speaking as one given entirely to reflexive functions, as does Goodchild:

[Goodchild] tried to imagine some deep, significant spiritual drama, some contrivance, some plot that would include them both [Goodchild and Edwin Bell] and be designed solely for the purpose of rescuing Pedigree from his hell; and then had to admit to himself that the whole affair was about Sim the ageing bookseller or no one. (247)

The passage verges on incoherence when read as the thought-experience of Sim Goodchild. There is little reason the reader can be aware of for Goodchild to interpret events surrounding his meeting with Matty as hinging entirely on Pedigree's salvation, and no precedent for his use of the literary analogy ("some deep, significant spiritual drama, some contrivance, some plot"). Read in the reflexive mode, however, the passage becomes perfectly clear. Pedigree's salvation constitutes the work's closure, and only the author can be concerned with plot contrivances by which to usher Pedigree to his salvific end. Pedigree's fate, however, is subsumed within the work's solipsistic framework; we are reminded always of the book as an insulatory

consciousness, reminded that salvation cannot be dispensed by the material text, reminded that the whole affair is about Golding, the ageing bookseller or no one.

Proximity between Goodchild and Golding (always a rhetorical proximity, rather than a total identification) is further signalled by the narrator's ability to move freely between first- and third-person modes, to *speak* Goodchild, just as Goodchild effects a textual habitation. Unimpeded mobility between first- and third-person modes, marking easy psychological access and an intimacy between character and narrator, occurs to a greater degree in relation to Goodchild than with any other character (cf. the narrator's early, exclusively third-person relation to Matty: "everything was inscrutable, except inside the man's head where his purpose was" – p. 74). In the novel's own parlance, Goodchild is *visible* to the writing subject, and a moral affinity between character and author (the unfigured, dreaming subject) is registered. In passages pertaining to Goodchild, vacillation between person modes becomes at times rapid to the point of destabilization, the speaking source is obscured, subjectivity is offset and untraceable. Those utterances most difficult to situate frequently give voice to an ensconced and lonely solipsism, and are often set apart in short paragraphs. Edwin Bell proposes to Goodchild that the strange mystic, Matty, might be able to transgress "partitions," the novel's chief metaphor for solipsistic enclosure:

"Perhaps he'll pierce a partition."

"Your man? Let him do it really, then, and beyond doubt. I know –"

I know how the mind can rise from the bed, go forth, down the stairs, past doors, down the path to the stables that are bright and rosy by the light of two small girls...

"Know what?"

"It doesn't matter. A committee member."

All is imagination he doth prove.  
 "Partitions, my majority vote says, remain partitions."  
 One is one and all alone and ever more shall be so. (225)

Presumably, "All is imagination he doth prove" and "One is one and all alone and ever more shall be so," are thought-utterances deriving from Goodchild. Yet they stand dissociated in tone, their cadence incongruent to Goodchild's customary idiom, their tenor in aberrant relation to the narrator's established function. Ultimately they read as disembodied articulations, voices of ambivalent origin, prompting a cardinal Nietzschean and poststructuralist inquiry: who is speaking? The narrator? Goodchild? Golding? That each phrase is a quotation, an allusion to another text, only compounds the uncertainty. The search for source and speaker is decoyed, the trace bifurcates beyond this text and into textuality, there to meet endless redirections and bifurcations in turn. Seemingly in accordance with anti-subjectivist theory, Golding consigns the speaking subject to endless dissolutions within the intertext.

Yet when Bell asks, "Know what?" in the above passage, Goodchild responds, "It doesn't matter. A committee member." His response refers to an earlier exchange, a question appropriately asked and answered by Goodchild himself: "Are you a committee Edwin? I am" (225). There is little reason, perhaps, to seek the dispersion of the subject beyond the text when Goodchild already views himself as an aggregate of opposing impulses and belief systems. As a textual entity, however, his psychological fragmentation is rendered as discursive polyphony. His composite of self is assimilated within a wider heteroglossia, his "committee" relegated to sub-committee, his heteronym, "Sim Goodchild," listed within the author's own existential

*dramatis personae*. For different reasons, both Golding and Roland Barthes will associate the concurrence of multiple discourses in a single text to the death of the monist and univocal Author. For Barthes the subject dispersed discursively is characteristic of all writing. "We know now," he declares, in the oft quoted passage from "The Death of the Author," "that the text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash." Golding will likewise associate discursive plurality with the death of the monist and univocal author, but will attach a significance to the "tissue of quotations" that Barthes does not intend.

"There is room in the writer's awareness for more than the simulacrum of abundance however that abundance may seem to blaze," claims Golding in a lecture delivered in Hamburg entitled "Belief and Creativity" (1980).<sup>17</sup> Here Golding relates the dissolution of belief systems (religious, political, philosophical, artistic) with the diminishment of creative ability. The proliferation of discursive systems in modernity, he argues, effects a diminishment in one's propensity for "belief," a term necessary to the creative act. The artist is exposed to an over-abundance of human-produced sense data – aural, imagist and linguistic rhetorical systems – a cluttered semiotic world, the native element of critics rather than creators. Culture's evolving codifications displace capacity for the primordial belief, and thus for the primordial creative voice. For it is this "belief" that Golding will invest with creative (and destructive) potential. Yet belief itself becomes the *locus quo* of creativity in "Belief and Creativity," and Golding's essay might be said to perform belief rather than to define it. In his hands "belief" retains its

mystificatory function: "The act of believing, the ground of believing rather than the structure built on it, becomes more mysterious it seems to me, the more I examine it. It grows more irrational" (190). By "belief" Golding signifies a wide range of epistemological assumptions with which one can be more or less invested. A strong belief in the ability to walk across a room might lead one to initiate and execute this complex process (complex, at least, in terms of precise quantitative analysis). Similarly, the intensity of a poet's artistic vision, a form of "belief," can be such that the virtually incalculable act (the poetic rendering of an inspired conviction) is successfully assayed and executed. Writing from within an all-consuming and peremptory belief, the inspired poet becomes a *maker* – not a "site" through which language plays freely, but one whose profoundly assured artistic purpose marshals the sundry discursive strands of language to meet uniform aims. Such, claims Golding, is the "genius of belief."

In "Belief and Creativity," however, he does not identify himself as having access to such belief, but as one conditioned by the over-abundant "phantasmata," by the fragmented mundanity of half-beliefs: "Here is no sage to bring you a distilled wisdom. Here is an ageing novelist, floundering in all the complexities of twentieth-century living, all the muddle of part beliefs" (192). He aligns himself neither with the great poets – "We [novelists], with our huge pack of words on our backs are peddlers, the poets' poor relations" (192) – nor with the religious and political geniuses of belief. Rather, he identifies himself with majority and mediocrity:

The rare mystic who can succeed in what has been called the practice of the presence of God, regretfully with him I have nothing to do. Some people can murder for democracy. With them I have nothing to do either. Alas, we do not pass our lives

among the geniuses of belief, perhaps we may live a long life and never meet one. If we were to meet one, it is my guess that his passing would scorch us like a blow-torch. (189)

The Hamburg lecture was delivered within a year of the publication of *Darkness Visible*, and while Golding refused to speak of the novel, "Belief and Creativity" treats several of its themes, and is the closest thing to commentary of the text within Golding's writings. The phrase, "scorch us like a blow-torch," in the above passage recalls the motif of burnt flesh in *Darkness Visible* (Matty emerges from flame at the novel's opening, and passes into flame at the end of his life; an incendiary negation of materiality thus marks the alpha and omega of his life). "The rare mystic who can succeed in what has been called the practice of the presence of God," is an apt description of Matty; and "those who can murder for democracy" characterises Sophy's twin sister, the political terrorist, Toni. Just as Goodchild occupies a moral and existential middle ground between Matty and the Stanhope twins, Golding situates himself between the opposing poles of belief, between creation and destruction, between Darkness and Light: "We, the community, pass our lives with whole high-rises, whole congeries of belief inside us, seldom knowing which is going to govern us at a given moment" (189). Here, Goodchild's role as authorial proxy becomes clearer, for he also views himself as being comprised of dissonant congeries of half-belief: "It is all reasonable," he reflects,

It is all equally unreasonable. I believe it all as much as I believe anything that is out of sight; as I believe in the expanding universe, which is to say as I believe in the battle of Hastings, as I believe in the life of Jesus, as I believe in—It is a kind of belief which touches nothing in me. It is a kind of second-class believing. My beliefs are me; many and trivial. (200)

Through Goodchild, Golding voices aspects of the authorial condition: his mundane and middling circumstances, his dearth of conviction and creative potential, his subjection to textual and material determinants. Goodchild is assimilated by language and community (*Goodchild*: sired, that is, through anteriority; *Goodchild*, as in accordance to convention, more concerned, as Bell points out, with *faux pas* than with sin). He is untermensch to Nietzsche's ubersmench, the common man whom Zarathustra berates: "It is not your sin, but your moderation that cries to heaven, your very meanness of sinning cries to heaven!"<sup>18</sup> The ponderous abundance of books housed in his shop provides him with a living (bread alone) but does not offer a means of spiritual release, of "piercing partitions." *Darkness Visible* is reflexively registered as yet another stock-item in the "store of frozen speech," an item fatally divorced from the noumenal. Golding's identification with Goodchild confirms creative depletion and the authorial death.

Goodchild feels himself to be dissociated from creativity, or as he puts it, from "First Things." If beginnings in the classical text mark their emergence from the infinite with the imprimatur of divinity (access to "the Word", or the epic evocation of the muse) then those chapters concerning Goodchild (twelve, thirteen, fifteen and sixteen) register instead aspects of derivation and the absence of *logos*. In the beginning was the Text, at least in matters pertaining to Goodchild. In "Belief and Creativity," Golding states, "I have set over against the geniuses, the generality of us more concerned with the daily job, the effort in confusion, than with first and last things" (190). Part Three of *Darkness Visible* begins by echoing this statement: "Next door to Sprawson's, in Goodchild's shop, Sim Goodchild sat at the back and tried



to think about First Things.” The first word, “Next,” abnegates first-ness, replacing origin with continuity, genesis with exodus. Goodchild’s attempt to contemplate First Things is futile:

...what with the jets souging down every minute to London airport and the monstrous continental trucks doing their best to break down the Old Bridge, any thought was impossible. Moreover he knew that after a moment or two on First Things (getting back he sometimes called it) he knew he would be likely to find himself brooding on the fact that he was too fat...  
(193)

Preoccupied with his own shortcomings, mired in the din and detail of daily living, Goodchild operates at a permanent remove from “first things.” The beginnings of chapters fifteen and sixteen index his subjection to an inherited semiology inclusive of the most minor of gestures. In chapter fifteen, Goodchild fails to persuade his wife to meet Matty: “Ruth shook her head smiling. Sim spread his hands in a gesture unconsciously imitated from his grandfather” (241); chapter sixteen begins, “As they let him out of the back of the building Sim adjusted his coloured spectacles with movements so habitual they seemed to have become a part of his automatic life” (255). Chapter thirteen appears to break from the pattern, beginning with a description of Ruth, feverish and delusional: “Ruth was being fanciful.” She lies “fanciful” on the “double-bed where the children were begotten a generation ago” (215). By no means his muse, Ruth is Sim’s “down-to-earth” other, and their union begets two children, a boy and a girl. Procreation here evokes structural oppositions between reproduction and creation (compare Matty’s apparently immaculate origins). In the case of the Goodchilds, the decidedly maculate generation of man and woman from man and woman will involve entropic elements as well, for their son is in a permanent comatose state (in another

example, the closed system of Edwin and Edwina, facsimiles of one another, has had no issue at all). The word "fanciful" in the first sentence evokes the Coleridgean opposition between maculate Fancy and immaculate Imagination, and associates the first with physical malady and degeneration. Yet Ruth's delusions appear prescient, "He moved. I saw him.... She used a knife." Sophy will indeed intend to use a knife on the kidnapped child, and whether Ruth's physical malady manifests as Coleridge's mundane Fancy, or an ascetically evoked, transcendent Imagination, is left as ambiguous proposition.

Not only "fancy," but the Coleridgean imagination and its Romantic hypostases are found emptied of transcendent value in *Darkness Visible*. Goodchild and Bell wait (with Beckettian overtones) at Sophy's stables for Matty, who never arrives. Passing time, they inadvertently discover the chair and ropes inside a cupboard intended for the kidnapped child. Goodchild's automatic assessment of the situation is itself a kind of psychological bondage: "At once his mind jumped to the same dreary conclusion, sex" (243-44). He had recently seen Sophy with an older man. "Listen. It's sex," he explains to Bell, "Don't you understand? Bondage. Sexual games, private and, and shaming" (246). Goodchild reflects upon his insight, the way which "circumstance could seem to imitate the intuitive understanding that so many people claimed to have and so many others denied was possible":

Here, in the rosy light, with the shut cupboard, a few sticks and twists of artificial fiber had betrayed the secret as clearly as if they had spelt it out in print; so that two men, not by mystic perception but by the warmth of the imagination had come simply to a knowledge they were not intended to have and ought not to have. (246)

But Goodchild's "insight" lands wide of the mark. The enormity of Sophy's intentions eludes him (evincing the relative moral innocence connoted by his

name), and the narrative, committed entirely to Goodchild's perspective, does nothing to qualify the assurance he feels in his own interpretation of the evidence. The phrase, "not by mystic perception but by the warmth of the imagination," recalls Romantic appropriations of insight from religious discourse, as *Anschauung*, Coleridgean access to the infinite, or other forms of poetic sapience. Yet the supramundane capacities of the imagination, as defined in the Romantic tradition, are debunked in the case of Goodchild. His *insight* is literally an *internal sight* only, a confirmation of solipsism, having less to do with truth than with an ensconced consciousness. His reading of the evidence presents itself as clearly "as if spelled out in print," or, in other words, not clearly at all. The "sticks and twists of artificial fiber" are materials used to produce paper bound into a book, as well as a chair equipped for bondage. Print and the secular imagination share a joint state of bondage within an epistemological cupboard, penned round with textual and material "partitions."

Death and Praxis

You remember that I said earlier how I knew that the psychologist's proposition that imagination is only the rearrangement of material in the mind, was not true. Here I present the denial again and do not argue it. The moments of genuine creativity must argue for me, if not with everybody at least with those who have experienced those moments or appreciated them; but my hope is better. The writer watches the greatest mystery of all. It is the moment of most vital awareness, the moment of most passionate and *unsupported* conviction. It shines or cries. There is the writer trying to grab at it as it passes, as it emerges impossibly and heads to be gone. It is that twist of behaviour, that phrase, sentence, paragraph, that happening on which the writer would bet his whole fortune, stake his whole life as a *true* thing. Like God, he looks on his creation and knows what he has done.

William Golding<sup>19</sup>

The motif of *visibility* yields a bountiful polysemy through every stage of *Darkness Visible*, intersecting with thematic, moralist, epistemologic, and authorial issues. Those characters occupying the middle ground within the Manichaeian spectrum between Matty and Sophy (Goodchild, Bell, Pedigree, and others) are pre-eminently visible, to one another, and to the narrator as well. Even before the Henderson scandal, Pedigree's pederasty is observed by his fellow teachers at Foundlings, and by community members in Greenfield; despite his confidence in its concealment, Goodchild's romantic infatuation with the young Stanhope twins is perceived by Edwin and Ruth; and gender deviancy within the Edwin/Edwina marriage is gossiped about in Greenfield. In the wake of the Wandicott fire Goodchild and Bell are summoned to the "public inquiry," and images of them, captured by a camera concealed in the stables, are broadcast repeatedly to a watching world. They become central figures in a public scandal, despite being found innocent of any involvement in the catastrophe, and their attempts to move through Greenfield incognito consistently fail: "*there's one of them, or, that's the fellow who gave evidence today, or even, that's Goodchild!*" (255).

The moral majority perceives its own, through sympathetic comprehension and projection, through the shared text of communal life. To be of a social text is to be readable, and at one point we hear Matty quote, "22 For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was anything kept secret, but that it should come abroad" (55). Edwin Bell presents a public image, a self-fashioning which is itself a species of text: "a kind of Edward Thomas crossed with George Borrow wind on the heath, great Nature, but all the same, cultivated, cultural and spiritually *sincere*" (196). His constructed identity is decipherable, but so is "the seamy side where the connections are," by a community that shares in Bell's darkness. He habitually puts his pocketed fists over his genitals when nervous, in an unconscious and protective act of concealment. "We are commonly dressed," says Golding in his essay "Fable," "and commonly behave as if we had no genitalia."<sup>20</sup> But in a community where hidden truths are shared by all, concealment always gives way to exposure. Thus Bell bemoans to Goodchild, "I taught the other day for an entire period with my flies open" (199). Of the headmaster's awareness of Pedigree's pederast leanings, the narrator says,

...at the very moment when people are most certain that their actions and thoughts are most hidden in the darkness, they often find out to their astonishment and grief how they have been performing in the bright light of day and before an audience. Sometimes the discovery is a blinding and destroying shock. Sometimes it is gentle. (29-30)

Concealment in the "darkness" is futile, for in accordance with the work's Manichaeian framework, such darkness *is* the "bright light of day." The community shares a common ontological and moral medium where the "hidden" is a component of perception. Inevitably, the writing subject shares in this reified state of visibility, rescinding his privileged position as the

invisible, authorising Author. The quotation above finds a twin declaration in *The Paper Men*, though here reflexive elements are more explicit. When evidence of an illicit affair surfaces, Wilfred Barclay marvels at the seeming inevitability of his exposure:

Beyond all the contrivances of paper, manipulations of plot, delineations of character, denouements and resolutions, there, in that real world, real dust bin, the quite implausible actions of individuals had brought into the light of day a set of circumstances I had thought concealed from the relevant person and finally disposed of.<sup>21</sup>

All codes, if they are to be called sign systems at all, belong to a community. Even an author as skilled as Wilfred Barclay cannot *write* his own impersonalist invisibility, cannot write himself a metaposition within the “real world, real dust bin”; he is a paper man in a paper world, readable and dispersed within the social text, a heteronym vulnerable to exegesis, dissection, and critical assassination.

Wilfred Barclay is assassinated by an academic desperate to write his biography, but author William Golding refers to himself as “a moving target.” Affinity between Goodchild and Golding indicates the author’s *stillness*, his mundane, textual existence, but the authorial consciousness of *Darkness Visible* does not identify exclusively with Sim Goodchild. The author’s bid for textual emancipation, his attempt to remain a “moving target,” appears then to extend in one of two directions: towards Matty or towards Sophy.

Both Matty and Sophy are capable of a degree of invisibility in the phenomenal world inhabited by Goodchild. However, critics who perceive them as having achieved a mutually *spiritual* transcendence from Goodchild’s phenomenal world misread *Darkness Visible*. No tautologous conciliation between good and evil, Light and Darkness, is implied by the numerous

parallelisms existing between Matty and Sophy. Their parallel growths only emphasise the creative and divine authenticity of one over the other. They do not converge at the end points of a cosmic circularity, but extend the Manichaeian duality along a linear range. While some deification of Darkness is alluded to, Sophy's alignment with matter rather than spirit is total. The categorical confusion extends into Manichaeian scripture itself, where Mani, founder of the Manichaeian church, speaks of the "Prince of Darkness." The Prince of Darkness is inextricably associated with matter and to imply a rarefied entity is no more intended in *Darkness Visible* than it is in Manichaeian scripture, as such deification would vitiate the fundamental discrepancy between spirit and matter. Similarly, Sophy's powers are inventive rather than creative, her prescience calculated rather than divined. She is the supreme author of contrivances, plots, denouements and resolutions, and while the author's communion with Sophy signals a high degree of artificial skill, it does not signal his release from textual darkness. The relationship between the author and the character, Sophy, will be examined in the following section.

*Darkness to Read By*

Everyone who wishes to join the sect... must know that Light and Darkness are principles, each in their own right and that their natures are completely distinct. If he does not perceive this how will he be able to practice the religion?

*A Chinese Manichaeon Handbook*

The truth and the secrets of which I have spoken... as well as the laying on of hands which is mine, I did not receive from men or bodies of flesh, but also not from the reading of books.

*Mani's letter to Edessa*<sup>22</sup>

Manichaeon mythology informs the dualism of Matty and Sophy, and its relevance to authorship and creativity. Commentators (most notably Donald Crompton) have traced the considerable Judeo-Christian content of *Darkness Visible* to Christian-literary contexts, interpreting its biblical allusions in accordance with orthodox Christian gnosis.<sup>23</sup> However, some of the novel's religious elements are not directly relatable to Christian mythology, such as Matty's attendant red and blue spirits, and the work's repeated assertions of a final irreconciliation between matter and spirit, *logos* and language. While the term "Manichaeon" has been used to figuratively describe some of the novel's structures, *Darkness Visible* appears, in fact, to be set within a specifically Manichaeon cosmos.

Manichaeism's rapid advance through Eurasia in the second and third centuries was partially the result of its unambiguous treatment of the origins of evil.<sup>24</sup> While the Early Church was ambiguous in this regard, identifying Satan as sole progenitor of evil within a monotheistic universe, Mani confronted wholly Christianity's implied dualisms. Darkness and Light, he declared, are distinct, antithetical, warring ontologies, and their perfect antipathy precludes Christian notions of an incarnate divinity, of God made



manifest, of Word become flesh. For the Manichee, matter is evil in its natural form; phenomenal reality is the visible darkness of the sensuous world. The physical universe, with its diseased and salacious proclivities, derives from Darkness, and not from God, who exists as a spiritual presence only, incorruptible and uncorrupting. Humanity results directly from a literal warfare between these ontologies, and is of equal parts Darkness and Light. Redemption, Mani claimed, is possible only through an assiduously practiced asceticism (extending logically to the embracement of death) such that divine particles imprisoned in the body should be released to their pure stasis of light.

In the extant fragments of Manichaean scripture, Mani emphasises the distinction between the generative capacities of Light and Darkness.<sup>25</sup> The Spirit-beings of Light, he argues, effect their own geniture; they are “evoked” through a pure origination, and exist independently of predecessor or progenitor. In the “Region of Light,” these beings constitute a pantheon without affiliation. In Mani’s epic cosmogony, the gods, summoned by the “Father of Greatness” to wage war with Darkness, seem at times the *filiations* of God, but Mani is careful to avoid idioms of procreation and genealogy. Beings of Light are signified as “evocations,” consubstantial with all Light, summoned but “unbegotten.” Darkness, on the other hand, is without demiurgic capacity; its generative productions depend on acts of material adulteration, sexual coupling, and incestuous commingling. In a material totality, a universe dominated by Darkness, all generation is regeneration, all production reproduction, and the cardinal impossibility that something should exist *ex nihilo* holds true. Yet the Manichaean cosmos (our present reality, according to Mani) retains a creative potential through the presence of trace

elements of Light, sparks of the ethereal imprisoned in the corporeal Darkness; these hold the promise of change, and are the only pneuma of human ontology. Thus Manichaeism is partially the dramatisation of contending modes of geniture: physical procreation and metaphysical origination, the one a closed system, given ultimately to entropic closures, the other an open system, sacred and eternally generative.

Likewise, *Darkness Visible* is set in a universe subject to two systems of determinacy, two courses of ontological possibility, each finding a representative in the respective figures of Matty and Sophy. In an early episode from Part Two, the little girl Sophy throws a stone and kills a dabchick paddling in line-formation with its siblings and mother (the daisy chain of the dabchicks itself symbolizes an aetiological progression). The improbable accuracy of Sophy's throw, states the narrator, was "...a possibility chosen out of two, both presented, both foreordained from the beginning..." (109). Sophy is struck by what she calls the "Of course" quality of the event, "...the chicks, Sophy, the stone to hand, as if the whole of everything had worked down to this point." She also senses that "once the future was comprehended it was inescapable" (109). Later, she learns to utilise her prescient abilities. While persuading Gerry that the Wandicott kidnapping is a viable scheme, she points out how readily things have fallen together: "That [Fido's] here and you know him. That I can – manage him – Sometimes there are coincidences; but sometimes the arrangement of things is – deliberate. I know about that" (166). Her dream of the kidnapped boy, bound in the noxious cupboard, and murdered horrifically by her hand, is

another instance of prevision. Her fantasy marks the event as predetermined; the boy's murder *will* transpire, and in precisely the manner Sophy envisions.

But the boy is not murdered. Despite her fatal precognition, the crime is prevented by the seemingly hapless intervention of Matty. Knocked unconscious in a burning garage, he emerges from the flames like an incendiary apparition, pursuing the frightened abductors from their victim. He acts as successful counter-agent to what Sophy perceives as predetermined. The kidnapping is thwarted not merely by the intervention of a hero, but by the contravention of ontological determinants, the second of the "two possibilities" referred to in the dabchick episode. Matty is the agent of this second ordination, operating independently and at right angles to the determinants governing Sophy's reality. In her world he is an anomaly, an invisible demiurge within the sphere of her perceptions, and he can alter what she perceives as predetermined.

Movement between first- and third-person modes occurs with Sophy in Part Two, though to a lesser degree than with Sim Goodchild. Here too, narrative access to Sophy's psyche signals the shared existential condition of author and character. Of particular note is her fantasy of the murdered child.

A peculiar interpolation marks the beginning of the heinous vision:

She felt an utter disgust at the creature itself sitting there on the stinking loo, so disgusting, eek and ooh, oh so much part of all weirdness from which you could see that the whole thing was a ruin and

I chose.

Should have brought a gun only I don't know, it is better with the knife – oh much better! (251)

The fragment paragraph, "I chose," declares the instant of fatal volition, where "a possibility chosen out of two" (109) will instate a new, ineluctable future.

Yet the fragment, with its abrupt shift in both person and tense, appears also to be the intervention of a new speaker. First-person passages in *Darkness Visible* naturally occur in present-tense modes (the preterite voice, after all, sounds as if engaged in narration). Yet here the first-person voice speaks in the past tense, seeming in this manner to cross boundaries between character and narrator. For a moment, Sophy and the narrator are joined in a single function. Henceforth voices of uncertain origin (“she swept her hand over his naked tum and belly button, the navel dear if you must refer to it at all and she felt paper-thin ribs...”) and a fragmented sense of Sophy’s personality (“The boy convulsed and flailed in the confinement and she was or someone was, frightened a bit, far off and anxious”) pervade the episode. In this manner Golding signals his own participation and culpability in the depicted murder. The pedicide, after all, does not happen for *real* on any level, but is imagined by Sophy – imagined and represented, in fact, by Golding. The boy’s ribs are indeed “paper-thin.” Moral corruption is evinced through imaginative propensity, which is sufficient to express the moral capacities of both character and author. As Golding is aware, a novelist who adjudicates between characters based upon imaginative propensities can only expect, as the author of all moral and immoral fantasy, to be implicated in turn.

But what are the natures of the dual determinations to which Matty and Sophy are subject? In accordance with the work’s Manichaeian structures (Matty and Sophy as homologous to Light and Darkness, spirituality and materiality) Sophy’s precognitions derive from a profound grasp of physical aetiology, whereas Matty’s sense of the future is divinely revealed. Sophy is described as having “phenomenal” intelligence (129), meaning rare and

remarkable, but the term connotes an orientation towards sense data, and a dissociation from the noumenal. She excels in the number sciences, “she could swim in numbers when she wanted” (an operation of the left cerebral lobe, again in opposition to Matty whose left side is damaged in the blitz fire of the novel’s opening – p. 131). That mathematical genius might manifest as precognition is illustrated in an early pre-school memory: “Sophy could do the step and would have liked to do it forever, one, two, three, hop, one, two, three, hop; calm pleasure in the way that threeness always brought the other leg with you to do a hop with” (106). Later she is attuned to rhythms considerably more complex. She tells Gerry of her work as a travel agent: “I did a lot of looking up tables and things, and dates and numbers. I understand them. I really *do* understand them you see.” She speaks of a co-worker who remarks on the series of sevens in the date, 7/7/77, “‘It’s quite a coincidence, isn’t it?’ ...it wasn’t!” Sophy exclaims, “Coincidence comes out of the, the mess things are, the heap, the darkness and you can’t tell how – But these four sevens – you could see them coming and wave goodbye to them!” (166). The anecdote is meant to illustrate for Gerry her sense of the kidnapping’s imminent success – and her confidence is well founded, but not infallible. Her prescience is calculated rather than divined, an intuitive assessment of her material surroundings complex to the point of sublimation and *apparent* supernaturalism, but it is ultimately positivistic in nature. The author’s association with Sophy does not proffer hopes for an authorial life, for a valid originary creativity, but only affirms the authorial death.

Saints and Logos

...there is a better thing. It is what the innocent enquirer had at the back of his mind, with his trepidation before the novelist though he will not find that better thing in more than one novelist in a thousand—what am I saying? One case in ten thousand! The thing without which the run-of-the-mill novelist can pass his life amid respect and admiration—that better thing is a passionate insight. Like all phenomena on the very edge of awareness and differentiation it defies analysis, though not, perhaps exemplary description.

*William Golding*<sup>26</sup>

“And yet, and yet,” begins Golding in “Belief and Creativity,” after he has defined the terms of his own creative bankruptcy – for he retains an impossible hope. Identifying saints as those gifted with creative capacities, gifted with a “genius for belief,” he says, “now I must perform a trick never done before, I think, on any stage and get novelists and saints into the ring together”:

...are there not in us all, hints and—not flashes—but sometimes sparks of the inexplicable, fleeting suggestions that of all things the human mind, its whole volume of mentation still remains the mystery of mysteries? May it not be then that the greatest of our novelists, the Flauberts, the Stendhals, the Dickenss, the Eliots, the Austens and Dostoevskis may find in themselves a tincture of that quality which exists in full power among the saints. (144)

Saints, and to a lesser extent, the greatest of novelists, share in a visionary and creative mystery. Golding’s curious distinction, “not flashes—but sometimes sparks,” reflects the parlance of St. Augustine, whom he admired, and of Manichaeian scripture where elements of Light inhabiting the material, human form are conceived as particles or “sparks.”

Matty is a saint figure, functioning as a means of authorial resurrection and salvation, as a scintilla of creativity within textual darkness. The author’s

metafictional challenge is to associate with Matty, to partake of the visionary aspects of his nature. Through Matty, Golding tests his own authorial "sainthood." The nature of this connection between author and character is outlined in a passage from "Rough Magic":

The author who has attempted to dive down through the complexities of living to find a curious creature not usually found on the surface... must either bring back a photograph or a living memory of it to the surface again. He must keep it alive in the aquarium; or more mysteriously and dangerously he must allow the strange creature to live and develop in his heart and head. (145)

The curious creature, Matty, lives and develops in the author's heart and head, but his "oneness" with Golding will also be read as a rhetorical ploy, representing either the author's saint-like, visionary status, or his collapse into solipsistic fantasy. A metafictional drama in which the author is first alienated from, and then reunited with Matty develops slowly through *Darkness Visible*. Having easily established a narrative rapport with Goodchild and Sophy, by virtue of a shared textual existentialism, the author's connection with Matty proves to be a more difficult challenge.

Leaving his position at Frankley's, Matty migrates to Australia, and there effects his transformation as the Man in Black. First he purchases a hat: "Some deep awareness of self rather than awareness of identity made him choose a black one with a broad brim" (52). A distinction between a centred "self" and a constructed "identity" is increasingly pertinent to Matty's development: "Piece by piece... [Matty] became the man in black, silent, distant, with the unsolved question waiting on him. 'Who am I?'" (53). With sartorial transformation, however, the "unsolved question" takes a new shape:

Not – who am I?  
"What am I?" (56)

His black attire is an expression of self rather than identity, an expression, in other words, of “what” rather than “who.” Dressed in black, Matty mourns his newly understood banishment from conventional social life, from “marriage, sex, love, because, because, because!” (51). Yet some violation attends the attribution of significance to Matty’s clothes (saying, for example, that they signify a state of mourning); for his new image is, in fact, an anti-image, an essentialism rather than an expression. The black attire marks his removal from the colourful “phantasmata” of the semiotic world, and his partial investiture in the noumenal. Inverting light/dark structures, the Man in Black forsakes light for Light, forsakes the glittering phenomenal Darkness for the invisible Light of the pneuma.

Significantly, Matty’s unsolved question, “who am I,” does not appear in quotation marks, whereas, “what am I” does. Matty’s spiritual growth coincides with an increasingly diminished textual presence; his detachment from phenomenal reality necessitates a dissociation from the narrative. He fades within the text, becomes invisible within the visible darkness of the book. After his move to Australia, his thoughts are often enclosed in quotation marks; the narrator can only report on them if they are spoken. In contrast, even the most private thoughts of Sim Goodchild – a creature in and of the text – reach us directly as first-person narrative. In the above passage concerning Matty’s unsolved question, the phrase, who am I?, (a matter of signified identity, spoken in the narrator’s language) is reported directly, whereas the essentialist “What am I?” must be heard, empirically, in order to be narrated. Even when quotation marks are not used, an empirical justification for the narrator’s knowledge of Matty’s thoughts is often



registered: "... Matty was dumb three nights running, struggling under the bedsheets and *in his mouth* trying to explain – *How can I help until I know what I am?*" (56 - emphasis added). Excluded from the non-textual workings of Matty's (super)nature, the narrator is restricted to third-person, reportorial modes, the development of which will be examined in the following chapter.

## Chapter Two – *Darkness Visible* (1979)

### *Swamp and Ante-Sign*

And the earth was without form and void; and darkness  
was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God  
moved upon the face of the waters.

Genesis 1.2

Yee gods of souls in Darkes deep that dwell  
Throw Phlegeton, Chaos voyd of lyght  
Grawnt with your favors leave to mee to tell  
Things hard throwgh hid in deeps from mortal syght<sup>1</sup>

*The Aeneid*, Book VI

Part One of *Darkness Visible* covers the first twenty-five years of Matty's life, from his originary emergence from the World War Two London blitz fire, to his meetings with the red and blue spirits and his keeping of the journal. One assumes all of Matty's relevant history has been narrated to this point (that is, we do not suspect the narrator of the opening chapters to be limited in a significant sense). Yet Matty alludes at the outset of his journal to an incident in Australia the reader can know nothing about. Of the red and blue spirits he says, "They were not like the ghost I saw in Gladstone it was a ghost it must have been.... The ghost was without any colour at all but these were red and blue like I have said" (86). What ghost? One is hard pressed, in fact, to remember Matty visiting Gladstone at all. But his stay in that city is briefly mentioned: "And Matty came in the evening unto the city of Gladstone which is a great city. And he sojourned there for many months at peace finding work as a grave-digger" (60). His abrupt departure from Gladstone is also related:

...another thought performed itself in his mind, a quotation and a horrible one: *Some have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom of God*. He had that thought in a grave, which was the best place for it. It got him out of the grave in a kind of instant resurrection and he was miles up the coast in a

land of violent and wicked men before he could put the  
quotation out of his mind. (61)

Matty conceives of self-emasculation as a means of sanctification and release from carnal desire, and is duly terrified. Possibly, he believes the lucid biblical quotation – “*Some have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom of God*”<sup>2</sup> – was voiced by that ghost mentioned in the diary (he certainly behaves as if he has heard a ghost) though we are only told that the quotation “performed itself in his mind.” Possibly, the ghost of the diary is unrelated to the above incident, and was seen by Matty at some other, unnarrated time.<sup>3</sup> Definitely, no direct account of a ghost sighting is given anywhere outside Matty’s diary. This apparent lack of correspondence between the diary and its preceding narrative proves part of a larger pattern where narrative limitation manifests in proportion to Matty’s spiritual growth: the reason Matty speaks of ghosts while the narrator does not is because the mundane narrator does not always see what the supra-mundane Matty sees.

The book’s restricted rapport with its protagonist becomes evident in chapter five, following Matty’s emasculation at the hands of renegade Aboriginal, Harry Bummer, and his move to Melbourne. Here he observes Aboriginals engaged in sign reading and divination (the throwing into a circle of marked pebbles and twigs, the blowing upon smoke and dust) and the following ensues:

The second time he saw an Abo throw the pebbles, Matty hurried back to the room he had been found in the Temperance Hotel [*sic.*]. He went straight through into the yard and picked up three pebbles and held them—

Then stopped.

Matty stood for half-an-hour, without moving. Then he laid the pebbles down again. He went to his room, took out his bible and consulted it. Then he went to the State House and could not get in. Next morning he tried again. (68)

The half-hour space of Matty's stillness stands like a blackout in narrative communication (though the lifting and laying down of pebbles effectively dramatises the interior suspension and resolution of the decision process).<sup>4</sup> Suddenly we are external to a character whose thoughts have been more or less accessible to this point. Excluded from his interior being, relegated to the reportorial, narrative continues in this vein, noting Matty's actions but not his motivations, listing his movements in minimally descriptive terms. He gives signs outside the State House, stacking match boxes, igniting twigs in a clay pot, developing his primitive symbology as the days pass, and our perspective reverts to that of the bemused and nonplussed Melbourne bystanders: "Then the man in black would move back on his knees and sit on his upturned heels and he would look round slowly, round under the brim of his black hat at the laughing people" (69). What Matty's signs mean to him, what their genesis is, how they relate to his biblical consultations, goes unstated.<sup>5</sup> We surmise their content to be apocalyptic and cautionary (as does the urbane State Secretary who later reprimands Matty for his incendiary indiscretions), but the sign-giver's motivations remain unaccommodated by language, seemingly unsuited to narrative expression. In contrast to the secretary's eloquence, Matty's sole verbalisation of the matter is reluctant, minimal and emotive: "'I feel!'" (71). The words rise painfully from his throat "like golf balls," figuring the laborious passage from illumination to language, and words for his inner thoughts come no more easily to the narrator.

He leaves Melbourne for the outback, searching for a specific kind of geography, though the narrator is not privy to his intentions: "He wanted it seemed to be low down, and he wanted to find some water to be low down

with, and he wanted a hot and fetid place to go with it all" (72). He finds what he wants, a remote and primeval slough, where it is impossible to believe there had ever "been a man in the place since man began" (73). At night he removes his clothes, fastens steel wheel wells to his waist, lights a lantern and walks into the swamp. At its centre he is submerged; only the lantern held high survives the water line. On the opposite bank he heaves the lamp four times towards the four compass points, then departs from Australia forever.

Most critical treatments of the scene are exploratory and tentative in tone: "This incident, in which he goes in search of a place, low down, hot and fetid, and where there is water, is difficult to interpret. Matty's subsequent actions... [do] nothing to lessen its mystery."<sup>6</sup> In their substantial studies of the novel, Boyd, Johnson and Gindin ignore the scene altogether (as McCarron also notes). Crompton, McCarron, Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor focus almost exclusively on the scene's allusive content, but none of the biblical or classical precursors identified aligns very directly with Matty's behaviour. Crompton, for example, interpreting the immersion as a possible act of penance for the child Henderson's death, evokes St Matthew: "who shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better that a millstone were tied about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea."<sup>7</sup> But Matty never expresses remorse for Henderson's death, only for Pedigree's fall from Foundlings; the wheels (a plausible millstone substitute) are tied about his waist, not his neck, and his choice of swamp over "sea" appears fastidious. McCarron cites as relevant passages from Revelations:<sup>8</sup> "And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven with the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand";<sup>9</sup> or, "And the city has no need of the sun or the

moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God lighted it up, and its lamp was the Lamb.”<sup>10</sup> The passages touch lightly on Matty’s specific actions, but a biblical model for Matty’s ritual is still wanting.

The immersion, in fact, is significant precisely because of its resistance to allusion, for it marks Matty’s growing independence from biblical guidance and his turn towards inspiration and creativity – and Matty’s creativity reflects the author’s creativity. In the swamp scene Golding’s sources appear more sublimated than studied, his imaginings more mythopoeic than mythological, his fiction free of obvious derivation but rife with allusive potential. The immersion reads as a composite piece of canonical and mythological reference; Golding is working *within* literature, but is equally concerned to avoid overt commitments to individual sources, as if he would produce *by design* the interplay and overlap of mythical elements, the “tissue of quotations,” the “multiplicity of voices,”<sup>11</sup> that Barthes holds as constitutive of narrative *prior* to authorial treatment. In this manner Golding signals a creative effort, as well as a concession to the limitations of creativity.

Textual precursors, as a means of interpreting the swamp scene, will seem tenuously relevant, but will prove red herrings in the end. The wheels round Matty’s waist, for example, do resonate with the wheeled cherubim of Ezekiel’s vision, as Kinhead-Weekes and Gregor suggest.<sup>12</sup> But there are myriad wheels in *Darkness Visible*, figures of cyclical and circular modes of being, of materiality without cessation, yet prone to breakdown and decay: the broken wheel of the fire fighter’s water pump; the stuck gramophone record; Sophy’s universe of spiralling degeneracy; Matty’s bicycle, symbol of a spatially and temporally conditioned reality; Goodchild’s reference to “The

great wheel, of course, and the Hindu universe, alleged to be identical to the one the scientists were uncovering" (200); Pedigree's ball, multi-coloured and deceptive, image of a visually captivating phenomenalism, used to lure children – an image, too, of Pedigree's cyclical obsessions, the graph of his sexual deviancy, which Matty relieves him of in the closing scene.

Matty, after all, can move at *right-angles* to the world's Sisyphean rotations: "There! Did you see!.... The ball that boy kicked. It shot across the gravel and through [Matty's] feet.... I tell you. It went through them!" exclaims Bell to an incredulous Goodchild (209). The motif of right-angles communicates the convergence of distinct orders of reality. Golding employs a similar geometric figure in "Utopias and Antiutopias," regarding the bicycle as metaphor of one's physically determined journey through life: "To confuse the issue I might add in parenthesis that I believe in another spiritual dimension which crosses that journey at right-angles, so to speak."<sup>13</sup>

Analogously, Ezekiel describes the wheels of his dream as omnidirectional in design: "[they] looked as if they were made of polished amber and each wheel was constructed with a second wheel crosswise inside. They could go in any of the four directions without having to face round."<sup>14</sup> In violation of the most rudimentary of spatial-temporal determinants, wheels functioning at right-angles prefigure extra-dimensional capacities, the transgression of form, the motions of the spirit. Matty's wheels also hang at right-angles, perhaps signalling a similar transgression of material determinants. But they harbour an ascetic component absent in Ezekiel. They hang painfully from his waist and loins, obstructing his movement and thwarting his will, whereas Ezekiel's wheels – the *merkabah*, or "vehicles to

the heavens" – act with the will of the cherubim: "When they stood, *these* stood; and when they were lifted up, *these* lifted up themselves *also*: for the spirit of the living creature *was* in them."<sup>15</sup> Matty's wheels delegate only the later term of the spirit-body dualism: they do not carry, they are carried; they do not impel, they impede and impair, giving hyperbolic expression to the gravity of physical and lapsarian existence. Matty's belt is the merkabah's antithesis, a vehicle to hell rather than heaven, a talisman of ponderous darkness, that which would bind him within the abyss.

Regardless of its simultaneous evocation and evasion of literary, canonical and mythological association, the swamp scene's greater significance lies where it has largely gone unlooked for: in its indeterminate narrative form. An unexpected reflexive metaphor (the only simile of any emphasis throughout the episode) draws attention to Golding's narrative stance: "The place [Matty] looked at now became additionally strange in the darkness which was thick as the darkness an old-time photographer thrust his head into under the velvet" (72). Narrative becomes the uncomprehending camera eye, enshrouded in darkness, divested of its former sapience, demoted to the purely pictorial. A total interior darkness preconditions any camera's capacity to *see*; analogously, the text's ability to narrate phenomenal reality is a facet of its own phenomenal form; its voided centre and core darkness (figuratively conceived) enable its translation of a likewise evacuated ontology. Only darkness is visible; the nominalist text can render a nominalist reality but nothing else, certainly not the hidden, numinous dynamics impelling Matty's actions at this point. Notably, it is the *exterior* scene that is likened to the pitch *interior* of a camera's enshrouding. Darkness looks



upon darkness, and the privileges of subjectivist transcendence and illumination are recalled. No hierarchical (ad)vantage is afforded the purblind subject, no categorical distinction between site and seer is registered; subject and object are subsumed within a common tenebrous state, observed and observing darkly as through obsidian, each constituted of the self-same ebon materialism.

Yet darkness *is* the textual domain, and the narrator its native inhabitant. Thus even here within light's occlusion, perception proves possible:

Then accustomed to the darkness by a long enough stay and willing... the eyes would find what evidence there was for them too. It might be the faint phosphorescence round the fungi... or the occasional more lambent blueness where the flames of marsh gas wandered.... Sometimes and suddenly as if they were switched on, the lights would be more spectacular still – a swift flight of sparks flashing between tree trunks, dancing, turning into a cloud of fire that twisted in on itself, broke, became a streamer leading away.... (73)

Sight reasserts itself, operative, it seems, at any level of light because this particular existential framework constitutes its very being. The various luminescences listed above are notable for their ephemeral, phantasmagoric qualities (phenomenal reality as unsubstantial, a literal will-o-the-wisp) and for their incendiary properties (intimations of Inferno, but one brought to earth, a naturalized portrait of Milton's "darkness visible"). Swamp lights appear as if "switched on," indicating their physical, and ultimately mecho-entropic natures. The camera eye is also a mechanism, and for what it is worth the old-time photographer has succeeded in developing an image in blackness, replete with spectral phantasms but empty in essence, a picture of positive nothingness.

For beyond all spectral extension, what remains permanently *invisible* throughout the swamp episode is Matty himself, his thoughts, feelings, motivations, even his identity: “everything was inscrutable except inside of the man’s head where his purpose was” (74). Narrative’s omnocular capacities are insufficient to perceive anything apart from the exterior of the imponderable man. Matty’s surname is unknown in Part One; it is “Windrove,” according to its repeated use in the novel’s final scene, though it is a name of apparently semi-ineffable qualities, bridging carnal and spiritual identities, resistant to instatement within the world (and thus within the text) – Matthew Septimus Windrove: praenomen, nomen and *numen*, it would appear.<sup>16</sup> Those who meet Matty cannot retain his surname in their memories, and this appears true of the narrator of Part One as well. But even the familiar “Matty” eludes the estranged narrator of the swamp scene. Referred to sparsely as “the driver,” or “the man,” Matty ceases to be known in familiar terms, ceases to be recognized as the eponymous hero of Part One. His immersion completes the course of his defamiliarisation, for the slough harbours darkness to depths unfathomable to narrative sentience, impenetrable to the otherwise perspicacious camera-eye.

Why does Matty’s defamiliarisation occur here? Without having witnessed narrative’s close affinity with subsequent characters such as Sophy, and especially Goodchild, the first-time reader cannot know the remarkable aberrancy of the swamp scene’s narrative stance. Apart from its pervading darkness, the bog’s chief characteristic is its removal from human culture, its dissociation from all modes of human signification. Predictably, Golding is at pains to convey the swamp setting’s quality of non-significance (an involuted

proposition: to signify the absence of signification might be deemed a collapse of purpose, a failure in the performative, whereas to perform the ante-sign is to signify nothing at all). Matty leaves Melbourne and we hear that "Australia knew him no more... human beings had little more to do with him." The swamp is "what no one else would want" (72). Deprived of human culture, he clings to familiar things upon his person, "as if there was something within that would bring comfort." He fixates on his bible and its wooden covers, presumably there for protection, "which was strange because surely the Word did not need it" (72). Perhaps in parody of Matty's literal faith in the physical bible's supra-physical resilience, Golding follows immediately with a bit of romantic and anthropomorphic lyricism: "He sat there for many hours while the sun took its wonted way over the sky and then sank and the stars came" (72).

But these stars shed no light, and there is nothing anthropomorphic about the swamp. Its portrait – studded with the subjunctive *would*, signalling the necessary but unfulfilled contingency of human perception – rests upon strictly provisional notions of anthro-perception:

Human feet would have felt the soft and glutinous texture....  
The nose would have taken in all the evidence of vegetable and  
animal decay.... The ears would be filled with the thunder of  
frogs and the anguish of nightbirds....

But there was no man in that place; and it seemed impossible  
to one who had inspected it from far off and in daylight that  
there ever had been a man in the place since men began. (73)

Here are the sense-data afforded by the swamp, were anyone there to receive it. But no one is there. But the narrator is there, present as a function of Matty's perspective, but dissociated from him as well, positioned impossibly between human perception and the unperceived wilderness. Golding offers

access to the vacant forest whose existential status is so famously debatable, a forest inaccessible by definition (would the falling tree make sound *were no one there* to hear it)? He negotiates a no-man's land separating silence and signification, and shapes a narrative space where narrative itself is theoretically excluded. The result is text punched through with obscurity, silences inimical to comprehension, moments of complete narratorial nascence. What do the various elements of Matty's ritual signify? When and why was it conceived? What does Matty achieve through its completion? How does his rite of passage facilitate his later beatification and apotheosis? What is the meaning of the narrator's estrangement from Matty at this point?

Given the scene's elicitation of tentative critical response, or its failure to elicit response at all (from those who reasonably trade critical silence for narrative silence) Golding's flirtation with the ante-sign appears close to achieving a meaningless consummation. But he is both a mystic – drawn irresistibly to the event horizon of non-meaning, because he believes in a greater meaning beyond the singularity – and a rationalist craftsman, too conscientious a craftsman, in fact, to neglect the novel-form excessively. Thus ultimately Matty's actions are *readable*, however alienated we may be from his interior experience. His immersion is not merely a literal and symbolic vanquishing of death and material baseness; it is an affirmation of his essential detachment from semio-existence, an assertion of independence from signifiatory modes of being. Matty's immersion is a movement away from the semiosphere; by entering the dark waters he affects a profound departure from human signification. In Australia he sheds slowly the vestiges of a socially constructed self; he exceeds the name's hollow nominalism; he grows,

inwardly and ineffably, distancing himself from the medium through which he is known. In Melbourne he gives non-linguistic signs to a bemused public, appearing in some sense to devolve from *homo sapien* to *homo pictor*, but all the while evolving from *homo fabucans* (Paul Ricoeur's narrative animal) to *homo lumen*, man of Light. As Matty's essentialist self brightens his narrational form fades; his spiritual growth occurs within the interstices of narratorial perspective. Matty survives his descent into darkness, thus transcending the moribund conditions of textuality, overcoming his own *and* the author's death. It is a question then of ontological compatibilities. Whereas Goodchild's most private thoughts are fully accessible to the intimately connected narrator – the habitual mundanity of his musings is well represented within the mundane text – Matty's interior self gradually takes residence within extra-textual dimensions; at least, this is the gesture Golding wishes to make, though he simultaneously disclaims his ability to do so.

The novel's epigraph, derived from Book VI of *The Aeneid* in which Aeneas descends into the underworld, bears on Matty's immersion. Here Virgil invokes pardon for his depiction of the underworld, a potentially sacrilegious or hubristic act. The invocation contains its own justification: "SIT MIHI FAS AUDITA LOQUI," – "May it be allowed for me to speak what I have heard." Golding clearly reads "Audita" (to have "heard") as a reference to vatic capacities, similar to *sight* in its visionary sense. Virgil's portrait of Hades, then, is the product of imparted vision, not profane invention; he is *merely* the messenger, a passive recorder of received impressions, and to be excused of sacrilege on these terms. The invocation appeals, in other words, to Virgil's privileged status as *vates*, both poet and prophet, licensed to bear

witness to sacred vision. But the swamp episode might be read as Golding's staged abnegation of such license. For unlike Virgil, Golding does not follow his hero into the underworld, he affects no apprehension beyond the dark water's earthly surroundings, goes no further than Hades' entrance. Matty's immersion is a departure from narrative perception; only his lantern is visible, testifying to a sustained component of his being, that which survives signification's absence, an inextinguishable centre independent of coded expression. But the essential Matty has become inaccessible to Golding. No hubristic gesture on the part of the author, such as Virgil might have been concerned with, is apparent here. The author writes without vatic pretence, posing not as an agent of vision and creativity, but as a word-bound operative of textual production.

Still, Golding proposes the impossible, a categorical distinction between text and character, a distinction he is *categorically* unable to demonstrate. The gesture towards Matty's divinity is patent, but so is the author's acknowledged inability to substantiate that divinity. Golding's sacred aspirations are as sincere as are his demonstrations of authorial bondage and blindness. The Sybyl of Cumae warns Aeneas of "the marsh of overflowing Acheron";<sup>17</sup> entering such darkness, she declares, is not difficult, the abyss is always accessible, "...day / and night the door of darkest Dis is open,"

But to recall your steps, to rise again  
into the open air: that is the labour;  
that is the task. A few, whom Jupiter  
has loved in kindness or whom blazing worth  
has raised to heaven as gods' sons, returned.<sup>18</sup>

Has Virgil himself returned? Is he one of "blazing worth," beloved of the gods, authorised to bring visions of the underworld to mortal man? By

entering the swamp, Matty (perhaps) offers his life in a trial of self-worth, seeking confirmation of his “chosen” status. His survival of the passage through “darkest Dis” confers upon him the sacred rank of the revenant; but the author neither accompanies him on his journey nor shares in the revenant’s glory. The author has yet to acquire the golden bough (Matty’s lantern?) that enables Aeneas’ navigation through Limbo. Golding concedes all terms of the authorial death, but is yet to enact his own return. Matty precedes him, and will lead the author toward some *symbolic*, visionary reinstatement before the novel’s close. Throughout Part One Golding scrupulously avoids transgressing his pre-established physical contingencies (and continues to do so until the novel’s closing scenes). “Physical contingency” has been defined in narratorial terms: a) an adhered-to chronological structure representing a time-bound author and text; b) the inability of the narrator to apprehend supernatural phenomena (the narrator’s unawareness, for example, of Matty’s ghost sighting); c) the inability of the narrator to record an event from more than one character’s vantage point (an adjunct to point A, and presented in solipsistic terms). But then why does Golding reiterate Virgil’s invocation for permission to traffic in the unworldly? He will eventually violate all of his narrative strictures, will transgress all of his pre-defined physical limitations, but not before re-establishing his connection with Matty. Whatever Golding seeks allowance for in his epigraph is clearly yet to come.

Diary and Revelation

Why? What does it matter? Is not our limited time more precious than that we should spend it making these spidery marks on paper? What is the impulse to describe and record? Are we trying instinctively to stop time or outwit it? Are we building ourselves a monument? Like the most primitive sign, even the most primitive journal becomes more and more obscure the more we look at it.

William Golding<sup>19</sup>

To read another's diary (whether or not one is invited to do so) is to intrude upon a writing ill-equipped to react, to take the discourse unawares, to trespass in the house of the blind. Regardless of exceptions (diaries intended to be read, diarists too self-conscious to open onto the private voice) journal discourse assumes the absence of the other; the intruder is not written into the diary form and thus enjoys the reflection of his or her own invisibility. Socially, one's presence (in almost Heisenbergian terms) alters the scene, triggers reactions and counter-reactions, necessitates a host of conventional behaviours, as if reality would accrue were one not there at all; such is the logocentrism of surveillance and voyeurism. In our desire for contact, for the immediate touch of the subject, the diary of another removes one source of interference – ourselves. Thus the diary fragment in fiction (the found diary, interpolated within the text, a treasure of authentic discourse) is a perennially strong novelistic device, signifying an especially potent access to the truth. "Diary" and "disclosure" become synonymous in the novel. Consequently, the journal fragment in fiction is often a source of plot *revelation*, and in *Darkness Visible* Golding extends the logic of this convention to its sacred, and thus problematic, conclusions.



Matty leaves Australia for England, docks in Cornwall and finds work as an ironmonger. Soon “the most extraordinary events” transpire. Two spirits visit him, angels of God perhaps, “The one was in blue and the other in red with a hat on. The one in blue had a hat on too but not as expensive” (86). They instruct him to purchase a bicycle and to ride to Greenfield in Wiltshire, home of Goodchild, Sophy, and Pedigree. Matty decides to keep a diary as a record of their visitations. His first entry, dated 17/5/65, begins, “I have bought this book to write in and a biro because of what happened and I want to keep the book for evidence to show that I am not mad” (86). But the diary cannot prove Matty’s sanity; it does not possess virtues of self-verification, and from the outset one sees that the journal form will be as problematic as its preposterous contents.

What is to be made of Matty’s diary? How account for its curious placement in chapters seven and (seven’s product) fourteen, and how does this placement correspond with the book’s own standing as Golding’s seventh novel? And what degree of critical detachment should be brought to its reading? Within the strained categories of the “real” and “unreal” in fiction, should Matty’s encounters with the red and blue spirits be read as having *really* happened? Or is Matty delusional? Or is it precisely the condition of interpretive undecidability – language’s inability to self-authenticate its own revelations – that Golding is concerned to present here? As with Jocelyn in *The Spire*, who mistakes symptoms of spinal deterioration for the warmth of a comforting angel at his back, or Wilfred Barclay in *The Paper Men*, whose ischemic stroke is experienced as an encounter with Christ, rational (often physiological) explanations for seemingly mystical occurrences are often

forthcoming in Golding's fiction. But this is not entirely the case in *Darkness Visible*. Certainly Matty's severe social isolation and physical malformity make him an easy candidate for psychological derangement; his meetings with the spirits *are* accompanied by physical symptoms – “all at once my body went cold and the hairs stood up each on end” – hinting at a possible physiological basis to his religious transports. At one point, Matty's symptoms are exhibited despite the spirits' absence, and despite that his epiphany at the time (that the apocalypse will occur on the date 6/6/66) proves mistaken: he appears capable, in other words, of *self*-producing physiological symptoms otherwise attributed to the presence of the spirits.<sup>20</sup>

Nonetheless, *Darkness Visible* appears to function – appears to retain its most rudimentary coherency – *only* if the diary is read as a record of true events. The novel's ending unfolds in accordance with the diary's prognostications. As the spirits foretell, Matty becomes a guardian to the Wandicott child, rescuing him from his would-be kidnappers in a manner he could not have prepared for (he is only present at the kidnapping because a flat tyre detains him). The spirit's declaration that Matty will be a burnt offering is also fulfilled.

The diary as a “true” revelation is integral to the novel's close. Implicated in the Wandicott affair, forced to confront the enormity of their misconceptions and the extent of the twins' immorality, Goodchild and Bell are cast into despair. The story leaves them with a spark of hope, however, for while watching television news of Matty's journal is reported.

“Journal? Matty's journal? What journal?”

“—has been handed to Mr. Justice Mallory. It may throw some light—“

Presently Sim switched the set off. The two men looked at each other and smiled. There would be news of Matty – almost a meeting with him. Somehow and for no reason that he could find, Sim felt heartened by the idea of Matty’s journal – happy almost, for the moment. Before he knew what he was about he found himself staring intently into his own palm. (261)

The journal acts as harbinger of hope and redemption. Against his better (rationalist) judgment, Goodchild believes Matty to have offered some true promise of salvation. The private diary, written within the partitions of a small room, is brought centre stage to a watching world, and though the novel closes soon after its discovery, one forecasts that its impact will be considerable. The ruse of the lost wedding ring, for example, engineered by Sophy to gain access to Wandicott school, will be exposed through the journal (Matty continues as Sophy’s nemesis even after his death), and having escaped detection throughout the inquiry, Sophy’s involvement and flagitious nature will be revealed. And no doubt some will embrace Matty’s diary as an authentic prophetic writing, and will follow the growth of the rescued child. The diary’s fate, presumably, will unfold in accordance with the will of the spirits who instruct Matty to discard his bible, but to keep the journal. The diary is to be a new New Testament, standing as the last divine revelation in writing, *the last scripture*, for the messiah to come “will bring the spiritual language to the world” (239). Matty’s semi-literate, grammatically crippled document demonstrates the entropic denigration of script, and augurs the imminent death of language and the birth of sacred immediacy and essentialism.

One easily overlooks that Matty’s diary is only partially presented in *Darkness Visible*. The diary discovered in a drawer in Matty’s room by investigators of the Wandicott Inquiry at the novel’s close does not appear in

its entirety in the text. Matty continues to meet with the spirits and to keep his diary (there is no reason to think otherwise) throughout the eleven years separating the first and last sections (the last entry of the first fragment is dated 13/5/67, the first entry of the second fragment, 12/6/78). But Sophy knows nothing of Matty's diary and thus neither does the narrator of Part Two. Indicators like "meanwhile Matty continued to write his diary..." are entirely absent. The diary begins and ends without notice; its opening and closing sections are present – Alpha and Omega, auspicious figures linking the diary to First and Last things – but its *centre* is absent, eclipsed by the darkness that is Part Two, indicating that we cannot know the diary's authenticity.

The gap separating the two diary segments (1967-1978) spans precisely the gap between Golding's sixth and seventh novels. Through these years, Golding was *absent*, and was largely treated as such by critics and the public. He later insisted, however, that he had never been absent, but had continued to exist and grow, despite not being represented through text: "I was alive and changing as live things do."<sup>21</sup> Matty too develops significantly, not through the novel, but outside of it. In the second diary fragment he is a changed man, free of previous doubts, certain of his purpose, comfortable in his communion with the spirits, confident in his control over the body's importunate desires. If a novel's hero is one who *develops*, then the most important aspects of Matty's growth occur "outside" of the novel altogether. The notion of a textual interstice is important to Golding. In his classic examination of problems attending phenomenalist philosophy,<sup>22</sup> C. H. Whitely points to the continuity of the *unperceived* as an obvious but firm argument for a reality independent of perception. Similarly, Golding uses the unwritten

development of a character to indicate extra-textual dimensions, to suggest that the hero (an extension of the author) is both a paper man and a *living* man:

This is all what Mr Peirce used to call a turn up for the book.  
 Since writing that down, I mean between the word book and  
 the word since I have been shown a great thing. It was not the  
 spirits and it was not a vision or a dream it was an opening....  
 The truth is that between book and Since the eyes of my  
 understanding have been opened. (237)

Matty's epiphany occurs within the obscure dimensions of "between," in the white between the words, beyond the determining sphere of "Since" and "book," *time* and *text*. Likewise, the missing centre of Matty's diary is not a negation, but the fertile caesura from which meaning is derived.

Golding foreshadows the arrangement of the diary fragments in a brief passage in Part One. Distressed by his encounter with the seven daughters of Mr Hanrahan, Matty calms himself by reciting Revelations:

"The Revelation of St John the Divine. Chapter One. 1. John writeth his revelation to the seven churches of Asia, signified by the seven golden candlesticks. 7 The coming of Christ. 14 His glorious power and majesty. The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him to show unto his servants—"

So Matty went on, his voice high; and it lowered bit by bit and it was normal as ever it was by the time he had got to—"19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book" (60).

Like Matty's diary, two parts of Revelations are presented, the beginning and the end, while everything in between is bridged by a short piece of diegetic narrative, "So Matty went on, his voice high; and it lowered bit by bit and it was normal as ever it was by the time he had got to—" (narrative assessment of Matty's inner feelings is based solely on external evidence – the sound of his voice, for example). Matty recites the title of the King James Version of Revelation as well as the chapter heading which finds its synopsis at verses

seven and fourteen, “7 The coming of Christ,” (an expectation) and “14 His glorious power and majesty” (a fulfilment); this mirrors the diary’s placement in chapters seven and fourteen, and the development from one section to the next, from Matty’s expectation of a divine purpose, to its fulfilment.

Matty represents the author’s most difficult and tenuous association. The author is more easily sympathetic with Goodchild, for example. But through Matty, Golding dramatises, or meta-dramatises, the hope that some trace of divine inspiration will inform the textual effort. Part of this dramatisation is communicated through the complexities inherent in writing a fictional diary, and Golding’s sense of these complexities is expressed in texts other than *Darkness Visible*.

At some point between 1967 and 1979, the period separating *The Pyramid* and *Darkness Visible*, Golding became preoccupied with journal writing and the uses of diary narratives in fiction. He began writing his own diary in the fall of 1971.<sup>23</sup> There had been earlier journals, an adolescent diary from the 1920s, a brief series of entries from 1947, and some unpublished autobiographical pieces. But the diary begun in the unproductive years separating *The Pyramid* and *Darkness Visible* became habitual for Golding, running with rarely a day missed from October, 1971, to June 18, 1993, the night before his death. The journal began as a record of his dreams, a Jungian-oriented strategy to break free of a creative dry spell (his daughter, Judith Carver, reports that these were difficult and often unhappy years for Golding, and that an unpublished essay called “History of a Crisis” can be found in the entries).<sup>24</sup> But the diary grew into a more varied record of his days and preoccupations, amounting in the end to some 2.4 million words, shorter,

though comparable to the diary of Samuel Pepys whom Golding admired and read all his adult life.

Journal writing greatly influenced his fictional practice. Golding scholars have taken little note of a conspicuous feature of the oeuvre: while interest in the diary form is not evident in the early six novels, diary narratives are incorporated into all of the later works (excluding the posthumous *The Double Tongue*; but even here we have a fictional memoir, and thus another type of life writing). Edmund Talbot's journal makes up the three novels of the Sea Trilogy; Wilfred Barclay recounts his life in *The Paper Men* while consulting stacks of journal papers; and Matty's diary is interpolated in the strict timeline of *Darkness Visible*. Golding's travelogue, *An Egyptian Journal* (1985), was also published during this period. Thus the topography of the twelve-novel canon falls dramatically into halves, split at the mid-point by an eleven-year hiatus – a difficult, revisionist period for Golding – and by the watershed appearance of the diary form in *Darkness Visible*. The impersonalist author of the early novels grew concerned in the seventies with narrative presence, and diary writing became his primary means of studying proximities between writer and work, between sign and signature. His sense of this proximity is outlined in an essay written during the hiatus, called "Intimate Relations."

“Intimate Relations”: *Diarists and Divinity*

History, where trends and groups and parties are named, is like a landscape with figures that have the assiduity and anonymity of ants. Biography moves in closer and shows us a single human face, and one man's opinion of it. But in diaries people paint a careful, injudicious and often unconscious portrait of themselves. Year by year, date by date, the picture, the portrait builds up. It is not merely the closeness of the pen to the subject, it is the minuteness of the strokes...., [diarists] cannot but, if I may be colloquial, 'give away their game.'<sup>25</sup>

Positioned at the physical centre of *A Moving Target*, “Intimate Relations” presents a puzzle to those interested in tracing Golding's bibliography. Unlike other essays in *A Moving Target*, whose previous publication dates are cited on the title pages, “Intimate Relations” is uncited, and would appear the book's only original contribution, though it is not billed as such. Practically speaking the piece is original to *A Moving Target*, though its beginnings can be traced to a much shorter review written twenty years earlier for the London magazine, *The Spectator*. Under the title, “In Retreat,” (a visually, if not conceptually, nascent form of “Intimate Relations”) Golding reviewed Raleigh Trevelyn's antiquarian investigation of the diary of Jimmy Mason, the “Hermit of Great Canfield.” Mason was a shy, paranoid, and at times seemingly beatific Essex villager who lived in reclusion most of his adult life. Mysteries surrounding his journal are the study of Trevelyn's book. The diary, one sees in hindsight, impacted considerably on Golding's imagination, influencing his future use of the journal form and providing a prototype for Matty's writing style. A passage from the Mason diary is quoted in “In Retreat”:

Went to bed at half past eleven, and not lain many minutes before felt something so strange come down from heaven. It seemed as if come so many times and would never go away. How bad it made me feel I cried and prayed to God. Directly it



went I felt no more. It could never be anything evil, but good as one of the angels of God.<sup>26</sup>

Matty's semi-literate writing style clearly derives from the diary of Jimmy Mason. The above passage, read by Golding twenty years prior to writing *Darkness Visible*, could appear in Matty's diary in perfect conformity to the tenor of his voice, and with the nature of his religious experiences. Sensitive to the detectability of his sources, Golding perhaps purposefully obscures the links between Matty and Mason in "Intimate Relations." The above passage, central to the early review, "In Retreat," and clearly anterior to Matty's diary, is absent from "Intimate Relations," and the title of Trevelyn's book, *A Hermit Disclosed*, is nowhere mentioned.

Still intrigued with Mason's diary many years later, Golding developed the early review into a longer meditation on diaries and their origins in "Intimate Relations." The essay opens with a discussion of Neolithic hand and footprints fossilized in caves in the Auvergne. Golding offers *kinaesthesia*, "a sympathetic identification with someone else's body movement," as an intuitive and rationalist means of interpreting the cave-markings. Despite the apparent tenuity of evidence, and millennia of separation, kinaesthesia can provide the sensitive observer with an empathic grasp of the scene: "We feel how the person lurched, saved him or herself from falling deeper into the pool by stabbing down and leaning on the stick" (104). Golding's ability to evoke ancient and prehistoric lucidities from scant archaeological evidence is demonstrated in some of his best early prose, "Egypt from my Inside," "Digging for Pictures," "The Hot Gates." But in later essays, like "Intimate Relations," imaginative contact with antiquity is tempered with a new strain of self-consciousness: "That capacity we all have

called kinaesthesia, a sympathetic identification of someone else's body movements, interprets the sign instantly" (104). Here, the visionary's authority is democratised, recognised as a "capacity we all have..."; imaginative reverie is rationalised under the scientific imprimatur, *kinaesthesia*; and the mediating "sign," bypassed in earlier prose, is now acknowledged (though Golding still wishes to establish its "instant" interpretation). This set-up is distinct in tenor from earlier transports into the past, as, for example, in "The Hot Gates" where Golding envisions the Spartan captain, Leonides, at the pass in Thermopylae:

Suddenly, the years and the reading fused with the thing. I was clinging to Greece herself.... It was then – and by the double power of imagination and the touch of rock, I was certain of it – that the brooding and desperate thinking of Leonides crystallized into one clear idea.... I came to myself in a great stillness...<sup>27</sup>

By the 1970s, however, the figure of the shaman-author, in touch with history's lingering energies, attuned to the pneuma of stone and artefact, is no longer felt to be a sustainable pose. The shaman's afterimage remained with Golding through his career, but his presentation of this image was increasingly qualified through time. In "Intimate Relations" Golding seems unresolved whether to speak of mysteries or empiricisms. Conscious of kinaesthesia's uncertain epistemological legitimacy, he maintains a rearguard defence of the term: "There are obscurities surrounding sympathetic kinaesthesia, but it is possible to develop that sense until we have at least a guess at what they did and why they did it" (104). But he is less drawn to science than to its failings, and it is precisely these surrounding "obscurities" that dominate the remainder of the passage. The quasi-empiricism of kinaesthesia gives way to an investigation into semiotic mystery:

[The cave dwellers] were leaving a sign; and the obscurity lies in this, that such a sign has latent in it some of what we have called sign, symbol, emblem, metaphor, simile. Some of that same obscurity surrounds the question of why we modern people of every age, rank, calling, sex, belief have left records of one sort or another. We have kept journals. (104)

Thus Golding introduces his topic – diaries, diarists, and the enigmatic motivations behind diary writing – for obscurities attending one’s reading of the Auvergne cave-signs are related to those surrounding the modern journal: “Like the most primitive sign, even the most primitive journal becomes more and more obscure in origin the more you look at it” (105).

Golding sets about finding the obscure relation between script and self in several famous diaries, those of Mason, Pepys, Samuel Johnson, Lord Hervey, and Queen Victoria. The “intimate relation” he seeks is that between the writer and the page. This connection, if it can be said to exist, is a spiritual one, for he believes one’s sense of God is evident in life writings; in journals people account for themselves, are brought face to face with their own conscience: “We come to a prime point of intimacy—a relation indeed so intimate that it has sometimes been defined as man talking to himself. I mean the sense that men have of God” (110). Yet having surveyed the diaries he admits to finding no “intimate relation,” no point of contact between God and writer. Other patterns emerge instead: “All this has really revealed little about the act of recording when the soul faces the white paper. It seems to have little to do with the impulse to create, something with the impulse to collect, perhaps a little with the desire to be remembered” (118). Common amongst the diarists is a desire for acquisition, a base greed integral to their natures. The essential self remains hidden, but it is outlined in the moral propensities of each writer. The soul is missing from the script, though the essential self is

delineated in the writer's moral nature. Morality, it seems, is self-disclosing; it cannot be suppressed in a lengthy diary; it will always elude the writer's dissembling or disguising efforts.

But what does it mean to search for an "intimate relation" – a contact between diarist and divinity – which is known from the beginning not to be there? In fact, "Intimate Relations" is structured upon the same principles as many of his novels. Golding develops an undevelopable thesis for over six thousands words before reaching an inevitable conclusion:

I have come a long way from the footprints in the pool and the hand prints on the cave wall. I have conducted a search through what material occurred to me to find a motive and believe I have failed.... A journey without an end, then – but at least it has been fun. (124)

The nexus is undiscoverable, unless it is indexed in the writer's moral propensities. This conclusion pertains directly to the function of Matty's diary in *Darkness Visible*. Having performed his midnight ritual, passing though the swamp where "no human had been for a million years," Matty vanishes from the narrator's sight altogether. The following chapter within this section entitled "Matty" deals not with Matty at all, but with Mr. Pedigree. Matty is next heard speaking in his own voice, within his own diary writings, signifying, on the one hand, his break from third-person narration, and on the other, a newfound, total communion between Matty and the author – Golding, after all, writes Matty's journal, a text which will assume revelatory import by the novel's close. Significantly, the room where Matty writes his journal, and meets with the red and blue spirits, is walled off with "partitions." By interpolating the journal segments within the single timeline of the novel, the author has either "pierced a partition," has gained access to the inside of

Matty's head "where his purpose is," or is imagining and writing, as always, from within his own solipsistic partitions.

In "Intimate Relations," Golding suggests that the nexus between life writings (the diary and autobiography) and the writer can be perceived as a moral quotient. The essentialist moral nature (the implication of moral "essentialism" is always clear, though Golding does not call it such) intersects the writing medium: "it is not merely the closeness of the pen to the subject," he claims; despite any degree of artifice or concerted self-presentation, diarists inevitably reveal themselves: they cannot but "give away their game."<sup>28</sup>

One wonders how this notion might apply to the fictional diary or autobiography. Even through fiction, Golding seems to imply, the author's moral nature will be revealed, despite the highest degree of skilled artifice.<sup>29</sup> The novel, therefore, is a survey of the author's moral propensities. By writing Matty's journal, Golding signals the *scintilla deus* within himself, a spark ensconced with the darkness represented through Goodchild, and darker still, through Sophy. Matty's journal comprises chapters seven and fourteen, marking the mysterious seventh wave within otherwise calculable cycles, and *Darkness Visible* is itself Golding's seventh novel, his most concerted attempt (though doomed, perhaps, to failure) to rend the seventh veil. Thus following chapter fourteen, where Matty attains his most beatific stature (as, by implication, does the author), the narrator of *Darkness Visible* acquires new abilities. First, the rigidly adhered to pattern of linear-temporal progression is at last transgressed. The period of time during which Matty's death occurs is narrated three times, from three different locations: in the stables where Goodchild and Bell are waiting for Matty (pp. 244-247), at Wandicotts School

where Matty rescues the child before dying (pp. 247-248), and near the old barge where Sophy imagines murdering the child (pp. 248-252). This triplicate take on one period of time is a transgression of narrative rules firmly established elsewhere in the work; the temporal transgression indexes Matty's sacrifice and apotheosis, and is sanctioned by the author's own acquired affinity with Matty. Thus, in the novel's final episode, the third-person narrator, barred from the mystical throughout the novel, perceives and narrates Windrove in his spiritual glory; the fiction which had so strictly confined itself to space-time formalities now abandons its limitations, offering the most forthright rendering of divine events in Golding's *oeuvre*.

Golding is aware, nonetheless, that *Darkness Visible* cannot function as a revelatory text. He stages the means by which an author uncovers creative and revelatory potential; but the drama of an author grappling with, and overcoming textual determinants is a performance only. *Darkness Visible* serves only as a testament to privately held convictions and desires.

Understanding the terms of the Author's death, Golding still believes what cannot not be confirmed through writing: that despite mundane pre-conditioning, the individual artist can create in a manner unquantifiable to the literary theorist: "the new thing appears from a point in the area of [the writer's] awareness, from a position without magnitude, which is of course quite impossible. Yet this is the occasional operation of creativity."<sup>30</sup> In "The Death of the Author," Roland Barthes seems to respond directly to Golding's claim: "Did he wish to *express himself*, he ought at least to know that the inner 'thing' he thinks to 'translate' is itself only a ready-formed dictionary, its words only explainable through other words, and so on indefinitely."<sup>31</sup>

Golding did know, yet his later life was committed to giving witness to the validity of creativity and authorship – a Promethean offering of flame, always in fear, as he was, that the flame had never been to begin with.

### Chapter Three – *The Paper Men* (1984)

#### Author and Critic

If he is a novelist, he is inscribed in the novel like one of his characters, figured in the carpet; no longer privileged, paternal, aletheological, his inscription is ludic. He becomes, as it were, a paper-author.... The word 'bio-graphy' re-acquires a strong, etymological sense, at the same time as the sincerity of the enunciation – veritable 'cross' borne by literary morality – becomes a false problem: the *I* which writes the text, it too, is never more than a paper-I.

Roland Barthes<sup>1</sup>

... it is not easy to crash your way into the literary intelligentsia if you happen to be a decent human being. The modern English literary world, at any rate the highbrow section of it, is a sort of poisonous jungle where only weeds can flourish... to be a high-brow, with a footing in the snootier magazines, means delivering yourself over to horrible campaigns of wire-pulling and backstairs crawling. In the highbrow world you 'get on,' if you 'get on' at all, not so much by your literary ability as by being the life and soul of cocktail parties and kissing the bums of verminous little lions.

George Orwell<sup>2</sup>

*The Paper Men* (1984) is William Golding's most personal novel, an oddity in this respect within a body of work notable for its impersonalism. However qualified, there is little doubt that the book's narrator, famous author Wilfred Barclay, is a shadow-figure and voice-piece of Golding himself, a means by which he speaks, for the first time in his career, of certain experiences as a celebrated author. Almost in accordance to the principles outlined by Barthes in the epigraph above, Golding is self-inscribed in *The Paper Men*. But the novel registers a diminishment of selfhood as well, one brought about by the reconstitution of the living being into textual form. Biographical differences between Golding and Barclay always take the form of Barclay's relatively degraded state. He is a pale reflection, existing at a Platonic remove, as it were, from his model and *source*, William Golding: unlike his author, Barclay wins no



Nobel Prize for Literature, nor is there much hope he will ever be knighted; he and his wife, Elizabeth, divorce, whereas William and Anne stayed together all their adult lives; Barclay is less educated than Golding; his novels are more “popular” and less prestigious, with lurid, unoriginal titles like *Birds of Prey*, *All We Like Sheep*, and *Horses at the Spring*. The relation between author and character is that of *gold* to *clay* – though Golding remains aware that both of these materials are precisely that, *material*, and Barclay might be said to represent the clay feet upon which Golding’s success rests. The quasi-autobiographical portrayal of Wilfred Barclay is both the author’s confession and self-condemnation, and a means of asserting difference and extratextual status as well.

Barclay is also a means for Golding to laugh at himself. As is apparent in interviews and essays, he often exhibited a difficult combination of humility, self-deprecation, and a compelling belief in his own visionary purpose. No wonder, then, that he leaned most naturally towards the impersonalist voice in his early work; narrative impersonalism rides an ambiguous line between self-negation and self-appointed transcendence, the supreme egoism of the Author-God. No wonder, too, that *The Paper Men*, his only overtly personal novel, should be at once a self-mockery with messianic overtones.

Golding is related to Barclay in an oscillating pattern of similarity and difference, textual and extratextual affirmations. No resolution is forthcoming in the matter of Golding’s ascendancy over Barclay; at all times their identification is ambivalent, another example in Golding’s work of the deconstructive impasse used as an artistic device. This oscillation marks the aporia inherent in the

author's relation to the text, where the creator-status is both negated and affirmed by language and its determinations. As Roland Barthes outlines in the epigraph above, the author is implicated amidst the fictional characters of his novel. To be a novelist is a means of self-assertion, as well as an act of dissociation, a way to alienate, distance and relocate within "paper," to translate I into "I." *The Paper Men* demonstrates an endless play between the author's being and his subjection to paper.

The novel also affords a glimpse into Golding's strained relations with literary-academia; Barclay attends a literary-studies conference in Seville; reads and reflects upon critical materials from the conference, ponders certain literary-theoretical assumptions, and struggles to grasp the seeming symbiosis (or *sym-graphesis*) between himself and the scholar of his work, Rick L. Tucker. He attends the conference unwillingly, lured finally by the promise of many "Carmens" still about in Seville. He attends, too, because of an obscure sense of duty, an "absurd" feeling of patriotic responsibility, and because he uneasily perceives that he and the critical community exist interdependently. As in *Darkness Visible*, the world of letters assumes ontological proportions in *The Paper Men*. Barclay *must* attend the conference, despite romantic notions of the free and uninstitutionalised writer;<sup>3</sup> because, by virtue of their shared medium, he exists upon the same existential plane as all men of letters,<sup>4</sup> and cannot extricate himself from their presence or the obligations they impose:

I had to lecture. It's amusing in a way that a man whose education finished in the fifth should find himself mixed up so with scholars.... You see, though you can accuse Wilfred Barclay of being an ignorant sod with little Latin and less Greek, adept in

several broken languages and far more deeply read in bad books than good ones, I have a knack. Academics had to admit that in the final analysis I was what they were about. (21)

What Barclay does not want to admit, however, is that they, the academics, are in some sense what *he* is about. He guards the notion of the *creative* writer as independent, categorically privileged by virtue of a disinterested and inspired potential. Here, as always, the question goes unanswered, a haunting – and Barclay’s hopes for creative independence are dashed in *The Paper Men* where all writers are portrayed as confined to a paper-scape world.

Following the conference, Barclay reviews some of its pamphlets and literature. Made wealthy through writing, he notes that money is not one of his problems: “Neither, at that time, was invention, for I saw, leafing through the papers from the conference, that I had no need of it” (24):

The conference had operated in the light of certain beliefs. One was that you can understand wholeness by tearing it to pieces. Another was that there is nothing new. The question to be asked when reading a book is, what other books does it come from? I will not say that this was a blinding light—indeed what are academics to do?—but I did see what an economical way there was for me to write my next book.... I did not need to invent, to dive, suffer, endure that obscurely necessary anguish in the pursuit of the—unreadable. (25)

Barclay evokes what the conference academics presumably did not take into account, the *experience* of creativity, the artist’s need to “dive, suffer, endure that obscurely necessary anguish.” But such an effort, he admits, leads only to the production of the “unreadable.” Ultimately, he claims only that which structuralist criticism had claimed all along, that no readable text can be an original text. For writing to be original (in the literal, ungenerous sense of the

word that theory has insisted upon) it must exist outside the network of the readable, outside that which can be called writing. Literature, therefore, is definitively readable, possible only within pre-existing linguistic and cultural codes. Barclay is demoralised (and thus, to some extent, convinced) to learn how his creative efforts have been founded on falsehoods: “So I wrote *The Birds of Prey* in next to no time, with no more than five per cent of myself—not the top five percent either—sent it to my agent, together with some poste restante addresses, and drove off in a hire car” (25).

His hostility towards the academic profession is evident, and is no doubt a reflection of Golding’s attitudes. What might appear odd to an admirer of Golding’s work is that the critic should loom so large in his awareness, that his relation to academia should occasion an entire novel which is half autobiographical experimentation and half diatribe. Here, the importance of the despised object is inversely proportional to the protestations of its unimportance. Several of Barclay’s disparagements towards the academic community contain an inversion of meaning. Speaking to Tucker, he exclaims,

“Hell, what’s a professor anyway? When I was young I thought professors amounted to something. They’re no better than writers. I eat ‘em for breakfast. Taste different, that’s all.  
“Critics, Wilf! They make or break!”<sup>5</sup>

At one time Barclay *did* admire the figure of the literary professor, as he did the creative writer. But experience has led to a devaluation of both professions. Whether a professor or a writer, all are paper men. Tucker continues to value the critic and idealise the author. But the novel’s title gainsays such claims, figuring as an egalitarian pronouncement, a levelling principle. Regardless of kind, all

writers traffic in paper, and traditional notions of inspiration, or theopneustic production, are discounted outright.

The intermingling or degenerative *inbreeding* of writers of all kind and stature within the shared medium of language was for Golding an undesirable state of affairs; this is communicated effectively through Tucker's discomfiting physicality, his relentless, cloying proximity to Barclay, and the pervading sense of an unwelcome, homoerotic bond between the two men. Through a series of mishaps in the novel's opening scene, each ends up half-naked in Barclay's kitchen, an incident leading to Barclay's divorce from Elizabeth (Tucker uncovers from the dustbin compromising photographs of Barclay and Lucinda, an old lover). Critic and author meet, and directly Barclay's heterosexual marriage comes to an end. His true marriage is to men of paper.<sup>6</sup> Critic and author share a bed, figuratively, and literally too, for having divorced Elizabeth, Barclay reports on a brief affair with another woman: "...but she proved to be a serious academic and a structuralist to boot. God, I might as well have shacked up with Rick L. Tucker!" (19).

It is easy to see how the issue of literary genealogy arose for Golding in the structuralist and poststructuralist periods; easy to see, too, how the author's sense of negation could be exacerbated through the late 1960s and 1970s, the high point of anti-authorial criticism. What may have been for the writer of fiction (though not for literary theoreticians) a somewhat nebulous concern regarding the subject's uncertain presence within the text becomes at this time a rigorously formulated and highly publicized creed of authorial absence. In 1967 and 1968,

English and French publications of Barthes's "La mort de l'auteur," or "The Death of the Author," appeared in France and America,<sup>7</sup> and in many ways *The Paper Men* is a response to the critical attitudes which ensued.

A central structuralist tenet, of course, is that texts, and the authors who produce them, can be understood only in reference to other texts, other authors. But being understood in reference to other authors was precisely what Golding did not like. That his works might be viewed within a matrix of others; that they should be deemed unoriginal, or without *origin* (an author, a vision), merely rearrangements of various sources; that they should be thought meaningful only so far as they belonged to the larger codes of literary historiography – these were notions current through critical discourse, and invidious to Golding throughout his career. He was not opposed to conceptual weaknesses in structuralist and poststructuralist thought; he appears rather to have been impressed and troubled by the strength of anti-subjectivist and intertextual arguments. The opposition, one feels, was more personal than intellectual – though, not surprisingly, his personal concern led to a profound grasp of the matter. The literary theory emerging from the continent encroached too closely upon the mystery and mysticism he perceived and valued within the fictional enterprise. At stake for Golding were the cherished notions of creativity, unquantifiable imagination, visionary, or even vatic capacities exhibited in the works of accomplished authors. These constituted a literary and religious belief system that was inseparable from his art.

When pressed on the issue of his influences, Golding readily acknowledged indebtedness to writers of Hellenic antiquity, Homer and the tragedians especially. But one suspects these stood somewhat as stars in his mind, reliable and auspicious navigation points, but too distant to be deemed an influence upon his modern voice, too remote to impinge on his own sense of originality. Golding's interviewers generally understood that the question of his influences needed to be approached with considerable tact. Those who brought him into direct relation with his contemporaries often found themselves in rough conversational waters, and exclamatory outbursts – such as, “Oh, do I admire Conrad? I think I'm pretty much tired of being asked which story of Conrad I got which of my stories from. I'm pretty much tired of always being told how much I owe to *Heart of Darkness*. I read that book *after* I wrote *Lord of the Flies*!”<sup>8</sup> – were quite common. On June 5, 1981, James R. Baker spoke with Golding in his home near Salisbury. All proceeded amicably, until Baker said,

Yes, but the idea of a novel structured on musical principle or analogy brings you into the framework with Joyce, perhaps, in his effort to do that and with...

Golding: What a ghastly thing to do.

Baker: I mean you're a novelist who has been a musician, music is very important in your life, it always has been.

Golding: We're talking about me?<sup>9</sup>

But the intrepid Baker pressed the issue, no sooner leaving the ill-fated topic of Joyce behind than drawing a comparison between Golding and Edith Sitwell.

This time Golding elaborates on his rejection of the suggested indebtedness:

...what do you deduce from that? Are you deducing that I am learning from Edith Sitwell, or you see similarities... what do you want me to say about them? Yes, there are similarities, but people are similar, aren't they? This is inescapable. I am partly a critic in

the sense that I do review other people's books, for my sins, sometimes, and I have been a teacher, and I have lectured, so I can't pretend not to know about this. But it is fatally easy, I think, to ally books to each other and to construct lines of descent as though books bred each other. There's something in it, of course, to some extent they do, but I think it can be very much overdone and I think it is.

Baker: It doesn't really suggest lack of originality in the artist, or that one book breeds another, or that this writer borrows from that one, or necessarily that he's influenced...

Golding: No, I've got beyond the feeling that I'm being attacked when people say this book is like that. What I am is bored by it, see?<sup>10</sup>

But Golding had not left behind the feeling he was being attacked when compared with other writers, nor can it be said that the issue bored him, for it motivated many of the themes in *The Paper Men*, themes to be traced out in a closer reading of the text in the following section.

### Signification and Collapse

There is no one who is creative without being just a little dissective, no one who is a mythologer of the unconscious without being to some extent an analyst of the process by which he gets his daily bread. Indeed I doubt there has ever been a maker, a wordsmith in the wider sense, who has sung as the bird sings, warbling his native wood notes.... It is an impossible discovery, a wordsmith who does nothing but exist in a state of passionate creativity. Of course all of us, writers, teachers, critics, though I cannot discover why, have a feeling that the wordsmith ought to exist and we have, do we not, a desire, half romantic, half reluctant, to find them.

*William Golding*<sup>11</sup>

The fates of author and critic are deeply entwined in *The Paper Men*. The book opens in 1961, with Barclay inadvertently shooting Tucker with an airgun at the dustbin outside his home, and ends around 1984,<sup>12</sup> with Tucker shooting, and presumably killing, Barclay with a hunting rifle as he sits writing at a table in the same home. Their fates are entwined, but the nature of their connection alters



between the sixties and eighties: the stakes get higher, the weapons more brutal, and the relatively innocuous sparring between writer and critic in the *belles-lettrist* tradition – still an appreciable ethos in the early sixties, and symbolised, one might say, by Barclay's non-lethal airgun – becomes a mortal affair in the poststructuralist years.

Throughout Barclay's narrative, he consciously or unconsciously explores means of escape from the circle of critic and author, and from the confines of the written self. His passion for stained glass is significant in this respect:

I had a hobby, by the way, a hobby with no genesis, just like a book, the hunting of stained glass for no reason at all, just fun, nothing written down. I just liked looking. I am in fact an authority on the stuff, though nobody knows so.... This eccentric enjoyment has turned me into something of a church fancier. You will have the darkest suspicions of me..., but I have to make it plain that though I have spent many hours in, for example, Chartres cathedral, there is nothing religious about my interest in churches. It was art, the way of preventing light from entering a building when you don't want it there. (26)

Though he insists his hobby is not religiously motivated, he portrays symptoms here and elsewhere of what might be called religious repression. Self-awareness of his religious tendencies occurs later – after his encounter with the blue-steel Jesus on the Sicilian island, where he exclaims, “I knew in one destroying instant that all my adult life I had believed in God and this knowledge was a vision of God” (123) – but for now his religious inclinations remain unconscious. Symptomatically then, he is anxious to deny devout motivations, and his description of the virtues of stained glass is curiously skewed. He acknowledges only its shading qualities, its ability to block light and to ensure a darkened environment. But stained glass both blocks and transmits light; its sacramental



import derives not merely from its iconic, sacred depictions, but from the interplay of light and solid matter that occurs upon its surface. Barclay expresses awareness of only one half of the glass's significance, noting the quality of darkness in a light/dark composite: "It was art, the way of preventing light from entering a building when you don't want it there." Syntax here allows for the interpretation that art *in general* is a way of "preventing light," which draws a connection between the glass and the text.

Barclay is an "authority," if not an author, on the subject of stained glass, and he points out that it is a hobby without "genesis, just like a book." Properly speaking, he does not mean "genesis" but *teleology*, for he is not speaking of his hobby's origins, but of its lack of an end-purpose. But the term *genesis* – as one of many articulations of the notion of presence, origin, *logos*, subjectivity, authorship, God, Law, and so on – is common to literary-theoretical discourse, and Barclay could be referring specifically to the critical lingo he encountered in the Seville conference. The term *genesis* adds to the valence of the stained-glass metaphor. Through Barclay's negative emphasis one is lead to consider the text as a possible transmitter of light, whose meaning derives from the genesis of light.

Following the conference Barclay leaves for the Swiss Alps where Rick L. Tucker catches up with him. Across the front of Tucker's sweater is knit-stenciled, "OLE ASHCAN."<sup>13</sup> As befits an academic who once studied phonemes, the inscription is a phonetic play on *Astrakhan*, the fictional, Nebraskan university where he is employed. The invented name, "Astrakhan," is significant for various reasons: it sounds like *Nebraskan*, and *Ole Ashcan*, and is a

type of sheep's wool, from the Russian region of that name, thus linking to Tucker's amply haired chest, and hinting at the motif of sacrifice. Naturally, Barclay associates the inscription, "Ole Ashcan," with the incident at the dustbin in the first chapter.<sup>14</sup> The micro-activity of Tucker's rummaging expands to the macro-activities of all literary institutions. The "real world, real dustbin," the world of implacable "Fact" and spiritual impoverishment extends to encompass the entire institution of literary study where the world's literature collects, and is sorted through and studied by academics.

In the Alps, Barclay meets Mary Lou, and falls in love. She is characterised as a *negative* presence, through her *inarticulateness* and her *uninvolvement* with literary matters. She is an outsider to the world of paper men, and Barclay initially views her as a figure of redemption. She is the promise of an extratextual reality. Later, Tucker announces that Mary Lou will not join them on their hike through the mountains: "You could say... Mary Lou isn't physical" (43). But ambiguities concerning her metaphysical virtues begin to emerge. If she is innocent, and blissfully unattached to all things literary, she is none the less *married* to Tucker, and will later become the lover of the Mammon figure, Tucker's billionaire benefactor, Halliday. Similarly, Biddy Pangall appears an image of purity to Jocelin in *The Spire*, but soon assumes a demonic form in his dreams. Like Barclay, Jocelin's attraction to Pangall's young wife is divided, half paternal and half libidinous. Ambiguity infuses a dream Barclay has of Mary Lou soon after meeting her: "Mary Lou was coming down the path from the high, flowery slopes. She was talking about solid geometry and explaining

the three fundamental curves of the calculus by reference to the immense cone of mountain that stood over us" (41-42). She descends as a Platonic ideal, discoursing upon the essence of the universe in geometrical terms. Yet scientific or mathematic articulations of the universe, as well as the figure of the scientist, frequently stand in Golding's fiction as spiritual antitheses. The mathematical essence of physical objects (the mountain of his dream, for instance) is either an affirmation of immanence or a deeper confirmation of the closed, physical structures of the universe.

The failure of language signifies a greater truth, inexpressible and trans-linguistic. Barclay the wordsmith confronts the limitations of his craft, saying of his narrative, "[it is] mainly about me and the Tuckers, man and wife. It's about more than that, though I can't really say what, the words are too weak, even mine; and God knows, by now they ought to be as strong as most words can be" (60). *The Paper Men* is "about" something absent, a notion that could be rephrased in deconstructive terms. The textual surface immediately indicates alterity. The narrative is two-sided, negatively and positively significant, like the coins that are evoked so often: "Useless to cry. We have no common language. Oh yes, there is language all right, as for example regulations for transporting flammable materials by air or how to make your own Russian salad. But our words have been clipped like gold coins, adulterated and struck with a worn stamp" (60). The instant the dualistic coin is employed metaphorically it loses its connection with alterity (it is impossible to speak of such a connection to begin with) and becomes an image of materialism in total, the devalued "gold" in *Golding*.

Having agreed to join the Tucker's for dinner, Barclay absconds to a hotel in the Weisswald. Opening the French doors onto the balcony, the hotel manager invites him to savour the mountain scenery, and suggests it might serve as "the source, not to say the inspiration, of some notable creation, sir" (38). But Barclay is not inclined to view nature romantically: "If anything a marvelous view gets in the writer's way. It engages him to it" (38). What the writer needs, he concludes, is to avoid such distractions, natural beauty, sunlight vistas, mountainous panoramas (and he would include here feminine beauty as well, and specifically, Tucker's new wife, Mary Lou): "What a writer really needs is a brick wall, rendered if possible so that he can't see through it to a landscape suggested by the surface." Art is best crafted in confinement, an enforced solipsism where the mind's shadows can fall in and reshape. Barclay conceives artistic production as a closed system. However, both the illuminating qualities of stained glass and the sunlit mountain range beyond his balcony prefigure immanence within materialism, an immanence he is anxious to disavow. Yet his unconscious attraction for various species of natural light and scenic beauty frequently betrays itself:

...thinking these thoughts and drinking more Dole, I watched a bit of Switzerland for hours on end. Was I, I asked myself, a romantic after all? I did not think so. The thing led nowhere, the pleasure was an end in itself, brought forth no lofty or spiritual thoughts. It was the higher hedonism, a man becoming his own eyes. (39)

He does not want to become "his own eyes." In accordance with the patterns of escapism and self-denial that define his character, he is repelled by that which draws him outside the sphere of his own ego; he remains in the shade of artifice

and artistic conception, within the closed space of a paper-reality. Analogously, he wishes to remain *behind* his eyes, within the skull's solipsistic darkness, and to observe the world in a mediated fashion only.

Much later, after his epiphany in Rome (to be discussed further on), it is precisely this ability to "be his own eyes," to engage in sight without seeing, that leads to a sense of redemption. Following the epiphany he speaks of a beatific sense of "isness," a malapropism he employs brazenly, no longer believing that language is adequate to describe his experience. It is this quality of "isness" that engages him to the beauty of sacred glass, and to the Weisswald vista, though he is only half-aware of the fact. Similarly, Matty in *Darkness Visible* is deeply effected by the scrying glass in the window of Goodchild's bookstore:

Matty looked at the glass ball with a touch of approval since it did not try to say anything and was not, like the huge books, a whole store of frozen speech. It contained nothing but the sun which shone in it, far away. He approved of the sun which said nothing but lay there, brighter and brighter and purer and purer. It began to blaze as when clouds move aside. It moved as he moved, but soon he did not move, could not move. It dominated without effort, a torch shone straight into his eyes, and he felt queer, not necessarily unpleasantly so but queer all the same—unusual. He was aware too of a sense of rightness and truth and silence. But this was what he later described to himself as a feeling of waters rising; and still later was described to him and for him by Edwin Bell as entering *a still dimension of otherness* in which things appeared or were shown to him.<sup>15</sup>

Within the phrase, "*a still dimension of otherness* in which things appeared or were shown to him," Matty's reverie and self-annihilation (Barclay's "isness") is linked to creativity, vision, and prophetic capacity. Matty has, in effect, become the scrying glass, a conductor of light capable of producing new visions for the world, while his own sense of self is momentarily erased. Such was Golding's

occasional mysticism. But mystic expressions are subjected to the most violent qualifications in his work, and are to be understood only in relation to their antitheses. A sense of alterity is established in *The Paper Men*, but at no point does Barclay link immanence to his own writing. There is only the unsubstantiated notion that texts, like stained glass, might filter meaning, vision, and divine truth. Barclay is steadfast in treating language as an artifice removed, in Platonic fashion, from the “truth” – it remains “the way of preventing light from a building when you don’t want it there” (26). Writing and all artistic mediation gather into a single category of alienation. If Barclay experiences moments of visionary transcendence in Rome, if he escapes his paper-hell through death on the last page, the book itself cannot say. The text is the brick wall between light and solipsistic consciousness. As in *Darkness Visible*, *The Paper Men* concludes problematically: immanence and vatic creativity are asserted, while the means of that assertion is viewed only as a mode of obfuscation, emptied of revelatory capacity.

For reasons largely unconscious to himself, Barclay is necessarily committed to the dark mediation of art; to do otherwise is to face squarely his own nature, and his own doom. Thus after considering the possibility of his own romantic inclinations upon the balcony in the Weisswald, he cannot resist parodying the romantic text of another English traveler to the Alps – an act tantamount to textual moustache drawing:

My head seemed clear of the Dole despite the empty bottle. Was it the view?<sup>16</sup> I played with the childish idea of adding a verse to Shelly’s poem, this time celebrating the mountains as a cure for *guelle-de-bois*, like Chartres cathedral. With that thought my

trancelike emptiness before Mother Nature filled with a desire for a drink. (39)

Barclay expounds upon the light-blocking virtues of stained glass, and of the writer's required "brick wall," but his yearning for light often betrays itself, and there are instances of lost sunlight that oppress him deeply. Tucker, in particular, often appears as an eclipsing presence: "Then I became aware of a large figure standing between me and the sun.... He was large, really large. Or perhaps I had shrunk" (29). Mary Lou, on the other hand, is for Barclay a joyful source of light, a semi-transparency, all "grace and glow!": "Her cheeks had *mantled*. That was the only word and before you could repeat it her cheeks had paled and mantled all over again. Everything inside was at the surface in a flash; but then, it hadn't far to go" (30). Always light eludes or outpaces Barclay's verbal abilities. He does not write about the stained glass; the sunlight and mountains of Switzerland are counter-productive to literary output, and Mary Lou's cheeks mantle many times over before he can utter the poetic word. Mary Lou is attended by sunlight; when she is near the sun is "bright behind the trees, the leaves showering their shadows across the gravel. Every tiny wave sparkled in the lake. It all made me laugh" (33). By themselves, Tucker and Barclay are existentially bereft of light, and when Mary Lou leaves they find themselves in their accustomed tenebrous state: "She went very quickly and a cold wind poured down the slope behind the bluff and dulled the lake to pewter. Somehow it brought the dustbin back to mind" (33-34). That Mary Lou initially represents for Barclay a potential release from his determined existence is indicated in several ways. In *Darkness Visible*, the game of chess – associated with Sophy's father, Stanhope – stands for a closed



ontology, a finite, non-contingent system where each game is subject to entropic progression. Barclay asks of Mary Lou, ““She play chess?”” to which Tucker responds, ““Hell, no!”” (42). Barclay notes that motion is integral to Mary Lou’s beauty. Later, he discovers her image in a photograph, and is appalled, either by its revelation of her essential ugliness, or by the degradation of beauty caused by her static depiction:

This was the doll, the fashion model, the plastic imitation of a girl, white faced, black-haired, the cloud of it frozen, the gentleness gone, destroyed – And yet they tell you that a camera does not tell the truth! There we were, Wilf the clown, still libidinous half a generation after he should have known better; and the girl, her lipstick black as her hair, her dumb flat face an exact expression of that mind as interesting as a piece of string! (133)

In Golding’s dualistic universe, one divided into material and spiritual light, the camera *does* tell the truth, but only in accordance with a single existential plane. Barclay’s original perception of Mary Lou as a source of light is also “true,” and from this perspective the photograph is less a detraction of her beauty than a condemnation of the image’s fixed, mediumistic nature. All art forms, literature, painting, and even photography, will constitute a loss of immediacy and essential beauty. Barclay is unsure whether to despise or adore Mary Lou, just as he is uncertain whether he belongs to a paper, or a trans-paper reality.

The Swiss Weisswald, where chapters four to nine are set, presents a complex, symbolic topography. The glacier Barclay looks at from his hotel balcony is an image of his own consciousness. Gazing towards the ice-crags across the valley he literally reflects, or *speculates*, upon his own nature, his romantic tendencies, his relationship to nature (“speculate” deriving from the

Latin *speculari*: to “observe”; *specula*, or a “watch-tower”; and *speculum*, or “mirror”). Barclay makes explicit the connection between glacier and consciousness when he says of a night’s sleep:

I dreamed myself watching the giant glacier on the other side of the valley; and under some confused memory of what Elizabeth said, I saw that it was my own consciousness that hung there. I understood what a wearisome business it was, this dancing awareness, this glitter of the mind from which I constructed my implausible but amusing stories. (69)

From his balcony he views sunlight moving across the glacial surface, exposing variations of shade and light. Like consciousness itself, the view changes endlessly. The mountain vista is chiefly characterised by ongoing, kaleidoscopic transformation: “It continued to change, to reveal further fantasies of rock and snow. It revealed slopes where there had apparently been caverns, turned the black cliff that had been a backdrop to the Spurli first to gray then brown” (38).

But in itself the glacier is preeminently *still*, a solidification of what was once fluid and active; thus it is both indicative and antonymous to notions of motion and animation. The glacier is a reminder of entropic processes, the universal tendency towards heat-dissipation and slow-down. The dialectic of the *quick* and the *still* signified by the glacier informs many aspects of the novel, reflecting dualities inherent to the narrative, to Barclay’s nature, and to the author’s nature as well. Notably, the animation Barclay attributes to the glacier-scape derives externally from the sun, and is not endemic to the glacier itself. Both the stained glass and the glacier are “brought to life” by that which Barclay consistently ignores, the sun. Animation finds its genesis in exogenous rather than endogenous sources. Neoplatonistic connotations attend Golding’s use of

the glacier-image. Barclay's paper universe might be described merely as dead weight, except for its relation to light, the Ideal, or the One. Glaciers in Golding's fiction tend to be suspended or "hung" over cliff faces, and in a state of imminent collapse. At the end of *The Inheritors* (1957) the Neanderthal Lok ensconces in a recess beneath a rapidly melting glacier. Its final collapse, heard by the tribe of "new people" from their boat in the distance, marks the end of Lok's life and the whole of his hominid branch.<sup>17</sup> The symbolic ice-mass in Golding's novels tends towards gravitational collapse, but is held in a state of temporary equipoise by its affiliation with the One, or the grace of God.

Barclay notices a "white line" in the mountains dividing "a black cliff against a mile-high iced cake" (37). "It is a waterfall," reports the hotel manager: "At the moment, with so little snow left, it is a thread" (38). The white ice above a black cliff illustrates a Manichaean division, though typically this one is prone to overlap, signifiatory reversals, and deconstruction. The falling waters originate from the Light above and lapse into the Darkness of the world below. The sun's light is both the source of the glacier's apparent animation and the cause of its disintegration. That incarnate reality will be taxed by proximity to the Divine, that too direct a contact with the Spirit will be inimical to the flesh, is a recurrent intuition in various theologies, and in Golding's mythologies, too, the Divine is both an animating and an obliterating presence. Of rare individuals Golding describes as touched by divinity, he remarks, "If we were to meet one, it is my guess that his passing would scorch us like a blow torch."<sup>18</sup> The relation of the sun to divinity and its deleterious effect upon the body is expressed in what is

perhaps the high point of theopneustic discourse in *Darkness Visible*. Here Matty records a vision of those blessed and oppressed by the Holy Spirit:

I saw them, small, wizened, some of them with faces like mine, some crippled, some broken. Behind each was a spirit like the rising of the sun. It was a sight beyond joy and beyond dancing. Then a voice said to me it is the music that frays and breaks the string.<sup>19</sup>

Remembering that the vista across the valley is a reflection of Barclay's consciousness, the waterfall represents a specific facet of his being, namely, the extent of his creative capacities. The Spurli symbolises a byproduct of divine presence, a channeling of inspiration, and the conversion of necrotic existence into the living fluidity of creativity. The waters mark that part of the otherwise stagnant glacier that moves and lives. Due to so little snow, the hotel manager remarks, the waterfall is now "only a thread." Acutely afraid of heights, Barclay approaches the balcony reluctantly: "Had I been able to walk forward three paces, I could have spat down two thousand feet, had I been able to spit" (37). The white-haired Barclay attempting, but unable, to spit over the balcony is a mirror image of the glacier and dwindling waterfall across the valley. Certainly Barclay can be said to be enduring a creative dry-spell. In the past, he suggests, he was more ambitious, but after the Seville literary conference he concludes ruefully that excessive artistic effort is unnecessary: "I did not need to invent, to dive, suffer, endure that obscurely necessary anguish in the pursuit of the—unreadable." And so he writes "*The Birds of Prey* in next to no time, with no more than five percent of myself" (25). His artistic inspiration is "only a thread" of what it once was. The waterfall, however, does not represent Barclay's artistic output – for all art as

viewed in *The Paper Men* is but a re-solidification or formalisation of what was once dynamic as moving waters – but rather his *capacity* for inspiration and creativity. All art, literary or otherwise, maintains an ambiguous relationship to the creative or visionary impulse, being both derived and alienated from the Light, both its issue and negation.

Barclay's evident misgivings regarding literary activity aligns conceptually with Plato's rejection of the poet. The first direct reference to Plato occurs in chapter five. Barclay imagines he is on trial for producing deceptive and immoral literature; his hired defense can only scramble for leverage: "I would remind you, m'lud, that the principal witness for the prosecution, the man Plato, is a foreigner" (47). Like Plato's deceiver-poet, Barclay feels professionally committed to dishonesty, a dabbler in shadows and dealer in untruths (again the metaphor of the stained glass comes to bear; Barclay seems only to appreciate the shade such glass creates, not its conduction of light). He is an inhabitant, as it were, of Plato's allegorical cave, where he cultivates elaborate removals from Truth. Tucker, on the other hand, idealises Barclay, treating him as a source, or Form, upon which to base his critical work: "You have never understood, sir. You are part of the Great Pageant of English Literature," prompting Barclay to exclaim, "Balls!" (44). Capitalisation in "Great Pageant of English Literature" colours Tucker's statement appropriately. While Barclay can only view his work as a species of sophistry, a means by which to keep the truth about himself hidden, Tucker takes for granted that he is merged with the literary ideal, is of the pantheon of Great Writers.

But what signifies the Ideal is never clear, for signs are themselves instances of removal. No metaphor in *The Paper Men* maintains allegiance to a single term of meaning within binary groupings for long. That which is associated with light will darken, that which is good will invert into sinister form. Ice and water, for example, mark a relationship between stagnant matter and creative fluency, but soon, during the important scene of Barclay and Tucker's hike up the mountains, the waterfall itself bifurcates, revealing dualities of matter and inspiration – and it is Tucker who first notices:

It was true. The stream, a single skein of falling water briefly interrupted by the path, had two voices, not one. There was the cheerful babble, a kind of frivolity as if the thing, the Form, enjoyed its bounding passage downward, through space. Then running under that was a deep, meditative hum as if despite the frivolity and surface prattle the thing sounded from some deep secret of the mountain itself. (83)

The waterfall is not seen, only heard. A thick fog envelopes the scene, and when Barclay leans against a rail it gives, sending him over the pathway's edge. Terrified, he clings to the slope until pulled to safety and carried back to the hotel by Tucker. To this point, Tucker has pleaded in vain to be appointed Barclay's official biographer, and upon regaining consciousness, Barclay utters his reluctant assessment of the situation: "It seems I owe you my life" (92).

Barclay's fall juxtaposes with his observations of the dual-voiced waterfall. His fear of heights is pathological, but the water sounds to him as if it "enjoyed its bounding passage downward, through space" (83). Anthropomorphically speaking, one might attribute the water's fearlessness to the support it receives from the second, foundational voice. It is this second voice – the voice

of holiness, ideality, and purpose – that Barclay is half-aware of but largely alienated from. His fear of heights, therefore, is understood as a failure in faith, the trepidation of the damned; he denies both his fallen nature and his salvific affiliation with eternal Truth, the second voice of his existence.

Barclay's spiritual growth occurs in two stages, an old and new testament, corresponding to the dialectic of damnation and salvation, Golding's universal pessimism and cosmic optimism. As always, the novel-medium is recognised as that which fails to convey Truth, thus an epistemological basis by which to verify Barclay's two epiphanic stages is wanting. His first epiphany is a confirmation of his fallen state, a revelation of universal "intolerance." On an unnamed Sicilian island he ascends a long set of steps to a primitive cathedral – a tenebrous environment he characterises as "a complete absence of gentle Jesus meek and mild" (122). Meanwhile the earth shakes – portent of God's wrath – and a volcano erupts on the horizon. In the cathedral's north transept he comes upon a statue of Christ in blue steel, and immediately has a stroke, and a vision as well:

It was taller than I am, broad shouldered and striding forward like an archaic Greek statue.... Perhaps it was Christ. Perhaps they had inherited it in these parts and just changed the name and it was Pluto, the god of the Underworld, Hades, striding forward. I stood there with my mouth open and the flesh crawling over my body. I knew in one destroying instant that all my adult life I had believed in God and this knowledge was a vision of God. Fright entered the very marrow of my bones. Surrounded, swamped, confounded, all but destroyed, adrift in the universal intolerance, mouth open, screaming, bepossed and beshitten, I knew my maker and fell down. (123)

Barclay's flesh crawls; fright enters the "very marrow" of his bones, as it does Matty in *Darkness Visible* when the red and blue spirits are near. Barclay's fear is deeply visceral, for flesh and spirit are antithetical, and his physical being is rejected outright in the presence of the Christ-Pluto figure. Suddenly, Barclay knows the absolute damnation of his body, knows the certain doom of his incarnate being. The "universal intolerance" revealed to him is an intolerance of the flesh, and of language as well. When Barclay returns to the Weisswald he notes that the stream is no longer two-voiced, that the cave from which it emits "more or less squeezed the water flat, which was why it only had that top voice" (135). The water loses a dimension, squeezed flat like paper, or like Barclay's weakened heart that feels wound by "steel wire." The analogy between Barclay and the single-voiced stream is emphasised later when Tucker remarks how Barclay's voice has "flattened" (138). Following the epiphany Barclay knows only the inevitability of his physical extinction. But the incident in the Sicilian cathedral has prepared him for his second epiphany of a possible and inexpressible Grace, for the stroke has damaged those parts of his mind which process language. After the stroke he must learn to speak again, and is at first only capable of the figure of the anacoluthon, for words no longer follow: "Not. Sin. I. am. sin" (127).

Barclay's first epiphany is of universal intolerance; his second is of God's Grace, and it comes in the form of a dream: with "sunlight everywhere," Halliday leads him down a staircase which follows a seemingly musical trajectory. Elements of antithesis are present – epiphany and descent; Halliday, the Satan



figure, as angelic guide – as in the Christ-Pluto joining in his first epiphany, the inevitable possibility of deconstruction in all representations of the Absolute. Barclay is led through a door: “I think there was a dark, calm sea beyond it, since I have nothing to speak with but metaphor. Also there were creatures in the sea that sang. For the singing and the song I have no words at all” (161). Henceforth Barclay will be at peace, having attained his “second voice,” though his vision of the inexpressible can only mark the imminent close of a narrative inadequate to its communication.

### Closure and Calvino

Of course, it is also possible to rely on those devices that guarantee survival of at least a part of the self in posterity. These views can be divided into two broad categories: the biological mechanism which allows leaving to descendants that part of the self known as the genetic heritage; and the historical mechanism, which grants a continuance in the memory and language of those who go on living and inherit that portion, large or small, of experience that even the most inept man gathers and stores up. These mechanisms can also be a single one, considering the succession of generations like the stages of life of a single person, which goes on for centuries and millennia; but this is simply a postponement of the problem, from one's own individual death to the extinction of the human race, however late that may occur.

*Italo Calvino*<sup>20</sup>

Italo Calvino's *Marcovaldo* (1963) makes for an interesting comparison-piece to *The Paper Men*, despite having been written twenty-one years earlier, in a different language and style, and concerning massively distinct themes. The manner in which each novel closes is similar, and provides an index of the author's changed status between the 1960s and 1980s. *Marcovaldo* tells of the misadventures of its eponym, an unskilled labourer in an industrial city, struggling to support a family in dire, working-class conditions. *Marcovaldo's*

bucolic imagination is at odds with his urban surroundings. Repeatedly, his pastoral daydreams land him in trouble with municipal and industrial authorities, and repeatedly he ducks disaster with Chaplinesque grace. Repetition is central to Calvino's purpose. Plot is episodic, with each episode entitled with the name of a season; five years of Marcovaldo's life are recounted, thus five episodes are called "Summer," five "Autumn," and so on. The hero's predicaments are perennial and irresolvable. Marcovaldo's inner-life and environment are eternally at odds. His lot neither worsens nor improves, his fanciful schemes are never realised, and ruin never befalls him. The opposition between fantasy and reality, imagination and materialism, is static, a dialectic with no pending synthesis. Closure, in the sense of a comic or tragic resolution to Marcovaldo's ordeals, is not possible, for even the hero's death would signify matter's ultimate reclamation, whereas Calvino wishes to portray matter and imagination as eternally counter-poised.

But Calvino's thematic intent and his affection for his protagonist are at odds. The novel must end, but he is loath to close the book on Marcovaldo's condition, loathe to leave him caught in an endless cycle of fantasy and materialist contingency. As in so many fictional explorations of the relation of fantasy and reality, the author's logical allegiance with the fantasist is exposed in *Marcovaldo*. Authors of fiction negotiate their place in the world through fantasy. Quixote's plight is that of his creator; both are shapers of new worlds, regardless that Cervantes's thesis concerning the absurd and even inimical nature of the romantic-chivalric genre was largely in earnest. In Jane Austen's *Emma*, to pick

from other examples, the heroine's propensity for romantic fabrication is juxtaposed with the stolid objectivity of Jane Fairfax (plain Jane fair facts). Fairfax figures as an indictment of Emma's character, underscoring the flaw of incontinent imagination, yet there is no doubt which of the two women Austen is in sympathy with. So too in *Marcovaldo*; thus in its final pages Calvino conjures an escape route for his protagonist, a flight of fancy to carry Marcovaldo away from urban imprisonment and into the lyrical countryside where he belongs.

*Marcovaldo* ends as follows:

And the city seemed smaller, collected in a luminous vessel, buried in the dark heart of the forest, among the age-old trunks of the chestnut trees and an endless cloak of snow. Somewhere in the darkness the howl of a wolf was heard; the hares had a hole buried in the snow, in the warm red earth under a layer of chestnut burrs.

A jack-hare came out, white, onto the snow, he twitched his ears, ran beneath the moon, but he was white and couldn't be seen, as if he weren't there. Only his little paws left a light print on the snow, like little clover leaves. Nor could the wolf be seen, for he was black, and stayed in the black darkness of the forest. Only if he opened his mouth, his teeth were visible, white and sharp.

There was a line where the forest, all black, ended and the snow began, all white. The hare ran on this side, and the wolf on that.

The wolf saw the hare's prints in the snow and followed them, always keeping in the black so as not to be seen. At the point where the prints ended, there should be the hare, and the wolf came out of the black, opened wide his red maw and his sharp teeth, and bit the wind.

The hare was a bit further on, invisible; he scratched one ear with his paw, and escaped, hopping away.

Is he here? There? Is he a bit further on?

Only the expanse of snow could be seen, white as this page.<sup>21</sup>

For now the hare is free, and in possession of unusual virtues of elusiveness, despite the Manichaean topography and its eternal nature. The extreme reflexivity of Calvino's later novels, commonly associated with *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler* (1979), is beginning to emerge here: "Only the expanse of snow

could be seen, white as this page.” The line links the hare, already a symbol of Marcovaldo, with the author as well. It is the author, not the character, who leaves his prints across the white of the page. The question then becomes, can the author free himself from his own work, his own textual constitution, at the novel’s close? Somehow the hare dissociates from its prints, moves beyond its own markings in the snow. Is the author likewise distinct from the text, or textually dependent, merely a paper-man, alive only so long as print continues? “At the point where the prints ended, there should be the hare.” But the hare has vanished, eluding the maw of materialism – and so has the author, released into the airy sublimation of imagination. Calvino celebrates his imagination’s emancipatory virtues, signalling himself as an invisible, creative force, immune to attack, present yet dispersed upon the infinite potential of a white page.

*Marcovaldo* belongs to the early years of Calvino’s career, written near the end of his experiments with Italian neo-realism, and before his move to France and exposure to Barthes and the Oulipo Group. From the time of his first novel, *A Path to the Spiders’ Nest* (1947), up to *Marcovaldo* (1963), he maintained a loose allegiance with Italy’s Marxist left, and took part in its counterpart literary movement, neo-realism, along with Carlo Levi, Cesare Pavese, Beppe Fenoglio. The character, Marcovaldo, is a sympathetic portrait of the Italian proletariat. But the political mandates of a materialist philosophy will not easily secure the attentions and loyalties of a writer with imaginative faculties as powerful as Calvino’s. In the end, Marcovaldo’s release from working-class hardship results not from revolution, the overhauling of economic relations, but from the

emancipatory virtues of fantasy. Calvino betrays the Marxist dialectic for the Hegelian, for Marcovaldo's disappearance upon the white of the page is an idealist dispersal. The allegory of the hair and the wolf is a forsaking of neo-realist tenets, a gradation away from realism into fantasy.

Numerous parallels exist between the closures of Golding's *The Paper Men* and *Marcovaldo*. In the final pages of *The Paper Men*, Wilfred Barclay sits at his typewriter, writing the words we read in the present tense. Outside the window of his country home is a "positive mountain of mostly white paper" which he has gathered, his life's accumulated scribbles, journals, and half-manuscripts. He wishes to build a bonfire from them, to attempt a ritualistic release from his own paper-existence.

Beyond the paper is the dark tree line where assistant professor of Literature, Rick L. Tucker, stalks his prey. Tucker has staked his career on the prospect of writing Barclay's "life," a notion repugnant to Barclay himself, and the papers lotted for destruction are Tucker's coveted source material. He is armed, and at this point, completely insane. The novel ends as follows:

Which brings us right up to today. I have taken all the papers from the chests and built them into a bonfire down by the river. As I sit at this desk I have only to lift my head and over the typewriter I can see the pile, a positive mountain of mostly white paper waiting there—startlingly white against the dark woods on the other side of the river....

Rick is a hundred yards away across the river, flitting from tree to tree like playing Indians. I shall have an audience for my ritual. Now he is leaning against a tree and peering at me through some instrument or other.

How the devil did Rick L. Tucker manage to get hold of a gu  
(190-191)

Where the prints end, there lies the dead author, murdered in mid-sentence by the academic across the river. One guesses the bullet hit Barclay in his side. Ostensibly, he has already received the hand and feet wounds of the stigmata, and an injury to the side completes the pattern of his crucifixion, or cruciforce. One guesses also that the wound is a gaping one. Though Barclay has no time to guess an answer to his last interrogative, the solution is clear: the gun used by Tucker is Capstone Bower's big-game rifle, the Bisley gun, suitable for elephant hunting, purloined by Tucker while attending the funeral of Barclay's wife. Tucker bags his author, with the implication that the critic's biographical activities are tantamount to hanging the author's trophy-head upon a wall.

*Marcovaldo* and *The Paper Men* close upon the same Manichaeic topography, a division of ermine and sable, the white snow/paper and the adumbrated forest. Both position the dreamer, or creator, on the side of whiteness, and the determinist threat within the dark woods. Calvino's wolf is a general representation of materialist forces – physicality, bureaucratic and militarist authority, monetary economy – but the predatory figure of *The Paper Men* is a specialised avatar of darkness: he is a literary critic, newly conceived since the late sixties as poststructuralist and anti-authorial. Such darkness proves more formidable a danger than Calvino's wolf. The hare survives and transcends the determinist attack, whereas Barclay does not. In the years separating each work the symbols incorporated by both authors have assumed new functions. Calvino treats whiteness as the infinite space of imagination and creativity, whereas Golding presents paper, no matter how white or brilliantly written upon,

as his principle exemplar of materialist determinism. Thus what appears a Manichaeian division of light and darkness at the close of *The Paper Men* in fact collapses into two shades of dark matter. Author and critic are one, both textually determined, both destroyed in joint confinement. Golding complicates orthodox treatments of whiteness as a symbol for purity and infinity, for the primary attribute of Manichaeian darkness is its phenomenal, and thus visible, nature. Unlike Calvino's hare, Barclay is not camouflaged against his stack of white papers. He is a paper man, and thus preeminently visible, an easy target.

As different as they are – culturally, stylistically, thematically – the juxtaposition of Golding and Calvino as a barometer reading of authorial decline might appear gratuitously arranged. But there is reason to believe that the contrast in fates of the author-figures in *The Paper Men* and *Marcovaldo* has as much to do with historic-critical change, the altered critical ethos and devolved position of the author, as with the differing temperaments of the authors themselves. At the same time *The Paper Men* was published, Calvino published his *Mr. Palomar*, which ends similarly to Golding's novel, with the sudden, unexpected death of the narrator: "‘If time has an end it can be described, instant by instant,’ Mr. Palomar thinks, ‘and each instant, when described, expands so that its end can no longer be seen.’” He decides he will set himself to describing every instant of his life, and until he has described them all he will no longer think of being dead. At that moment he dies.”<sup>22</sup> Mr. Palomar and Barclay, both shadow figures of their creators, reach many of the same conclusions at the endings of their respective novels: both conceive themselves as creatively

impotent and in the grip of implacable materialist forces; both are resigned to a half-life of subjection to various determinisms, and both have found potential peace in this death-like state. Like Barclay, Mr. Palomar dies in mid-thought, bringing the novel to an abrupt close. The book is a record of Mr. Palomar's reflections, on natural phenomena, on cultural and anthropological events, on philosophical and speculative issues, time, the cosmos, infinity, self and world. Like *Marcovaldo*, *Mr. Palomar* recounts the inner life of a dreamer, but the latter's tone is less lyrical, more sombre. There is no escape for the abstract Mr. Palomar, as there was for Marcovaldo, no release but through death, a termination integrated with the cessation of the narrative. The final section of *Mr. Palomar* is entitled, "Learning to be Dead," and here "Mr. Palomar decides that from now on he will act as if he were dead, to see how the world gets along without him."<sup>23</sup> He reflects, however, that

being dead is less easy than it might seem. First of all, you must not confuse being dead with not being, a condition that occupies the vast expanse of time before birth, apparently symmetrical to the other, equally vast expanse that follows death. This is the most difficult step in learning how to be dead: to become convinced that your own life is a closed whole: all in the past, to which you can add nothing and can alter none of the relationships among the various elements.<sup>24</sup>

There is little hope expressed in *Mr. Palomar*, for salvation, permanence, or the notion of the human life as a significant event. Or if Palomar perceives some hope in the analysis of each moment as a means of sustaining certain qualities of experience, this proves a false hope, for he dies before he can begin.

Though more vulnerable to the charge of literary naiveté than Calvino, one feels Golding was incapable of the degree of hopelessness evident in *Mr.*



*Palomar*. Subtly and indirectly, the ending of *The Paper Men* has more in common with the close of *Marcovaldo* than it initially seems. Like Marcovaldo, Barclay escapes his paper imprisonment, though there is no epistemological means offered to support such a claim; this is merely the impression the reader is left with, though Barclay's release is neither signified nor represented, but only inferred by an accumulation of redemptive motifs, by a logical extrapolation of the problems presented. Textual confinement signifies its opposite, the possibility of freedom; the extratextual is *negatively* indexed. In *The Paper Men* and *Mr. Palomar*, the authors' deaths are enacted. For Calvino that death is final, but Golding retains a secret hope in a reality beyond paper. *The Paper Men* cannot justify that optimism, but hope lingers nonetheless.

## Conclusion

### Negative Theology

I will use cosmos to mean what Tennyson meant by all in all in all—the totality, God and man and everything that *is* in every state and level of being. Universe I will use for the universe we know through our eyes at the telescope and microscope or open for daily use. Universe I use for what Bridges called ‘God’s Orrery.’ With that distinction in mind I would call myself a universal pessimist but a cosmic optimist.

*William Golding*<sup>1</sup>

My life is irreducible to what I say and it is certainly the case in, for instance, *The Post Card*, that I confess that everything I oppose, so to speak, in my texts, everything that I deconstruct – presence, voice, living, voice and so on – is exactly what I’m after in life. I love the voice, I love presence, I love...; there is no love, no desire without it. So, I’m constantly denying, so to speak, in my life what I’m saying in my books or my teaching.

*Jacques Derrida*<sup>2</sup>

In *Darkness Visible* and *The Paper Men* Golding seems intent upon a programme of *pre*-deconstruction, or an act of deconstruction incorporated as an artistic component. His principle metaphors are always two-fold and self-cancelling; his symbolic mappings always incline towards an inward collapse. Golding will risk incoherence in a bid for truth and synthesis, will risk obscurity for glimmerings of the unknowable. In *Darkness Visible* this difficult fictional practice becomes a form of self-imposed defeat, the art of failure. Golding’s career traces a pattern often described by Paul de Man, of a growing self-awareness, a movement from naïve romanticism to mature reflexivity and literary authenticity. Increasingly, Golding’s attention turned towards language – relatively unexamined in the early days of *Lord of the Flies* and *The Inheritors* – as the primary impediment, or even antithesis, to visionary expression. In *Darkness Visible* and *The Paper Men*, all binary significations – good and evil, light and darkness, damnation and salvation

– are located within circular rather than linear spectrums, where opposites meet repeatedly. The good and evil associated with Matty and Sophy shifts and overlaps. The spirits also call Sophy, though she does not respond, and interestingly it is Matty who murders a child (Henderson), whereas Sophy only wills such an event to occur. Each character, after all, is subsumed within the single, solipsistic consciousness of the author. In *The Paper Men*, Barclay flees his fate as a paper man, but his retreat occurs upon a spherical world where uncanny repetitions are observed, the same highways (illusions of motion), the same café tables at every stop. Barclay cannot escape, except through death, in which case his narrative must die with him.

But hope is the final term of Golding's art, not death. While he appears to meet the requirements of de Man's literary "authenticity," his heart lies elsewhere, and his narrative strategies are ultimately counter-operational to those of de Man. He was, as he often claimed, a universal pessimist, whose pessimism extended to all possible instances of signification; a universal pessimist, but a cosmic optimist, motivated by a belief in invisible grace, despite literature's futility. Like the fourteenth century German theologian, Meister Eckhart, and even like some recent literary theorists, Golding practiced what might be called a *negative theology*. For Eckhart, God was without phenomenal attributes, and thus could rightly be said *not to exist*, though the claim was not atheistic, but merely a recapitulation of God's transcendence. Golding follows a similar logic in the later novels. Language fails, binary significations collapse, but gestures of hope and an impossible sense of authorial self-affirmation remain. Such a tactic is perhaps

reasonable enough, to concede language's inadequacies, its determining forms, but to speak of essential truth nonetheless. Roland Barthes declared the death of the author, but the practice of death was never a sustainable proposition. The pairing of death and *praxis* was always impracticable amongst the living. To authorise writing, to endow it with truth-value, is first and foremost an act of irrepressible hope, integral to human existence, and Golding's art is a clarification of narrative's primary conditions in this respect. Within an insensate universe, unaccommodating to human understanding, signification begins as a reach in the dark, a mythopoeia and make-believe, a supplication for patterns of reason and purpose. Appropriately then, Golding's work can be called an expression of faith without testament, without sacred revelation as a means of substantiation, without a nameable God.

A sense of the impracticality of theory's promotion of various textual deaths has recently surfaced in literary theory. The slow movement away from poststructuralist "orthodoxy" within literary theory through the last two decades has of late taken the form of a return to "literary value," "life," "human meaning." The rigidly secular, anti-aesthetic and anti-organicist values instated in the seventies and eighties have slackened somewhat, such that Toril Moi can remark, "'Theory' today is the orthodoxy, the dogma that's taught to every student. If you really want to be a radical student today, one that annoys the professors terribly, you can just start claiming that words have meaning."<sup>3</sup> Speaking of his recent move from the Literature to the Philosophy Department at the University of Cardiff, Christopher Norris cites differences with inveterate poststructuralists as

one reason: “I suppose there was a feeling that Norris had flipped his lid, going on about truth, sticking up for ‘Enlightenment’ values, attacking the bogey man of cultural relativism, and so forth.”<sup>4</sup> Derrida’s recent concern for religion, responsibility, and deconstruction as a possible negative theology has influenced current attitudes.<sup>5</sup> Now, John Schad remarks in a recent set of public interviews with Frank Kermode, Toril Moi, Christopher Norris, and Jacques Derrida, “deconstruction’s ‘turn to religion’ is almost a cliché.”<sup>6</sup>

Derrida’s recent work, such as *The Gift of Death* (1996), makes evident the need he feels to deny presence and voice, but to live as if such contacts were possible.<sup>7</sup> In the 1990s religion became for him an important focus point of this two-fold necessity. In a recent interview – printed in *LA Weekly* following the release of *Derrida*, a documentary on the philosopher by Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering Kofman – he is asked how he feels about a posthumously published statement by Heidegger which runs, “Philosophy after Nietzsche could offer neither help nor hope for mankind’s future. All we can do is wait for a god to reappear. Only a god can save us now.” First noting Heidegger’s life-long, anti-religious sentiments, Derrida adds,

This is a form of what I’d describe as messianicity without messianism, and we are by nature messianic. We cannot *not* be, because we exist in a state of expecting something to happen. Even if we were in a state of hopelessness, a sense of expectation is an integral part of our relationship to time. Hopelessness is possible only because we do hope that some good, loving someone could come.<sup>8</sup>

Golding would have agreed, and in *Darkness Visible* and *The Paper Men* he anticipates the use of deconstructive techniques as a means of signifying a

“radical alterity, absolute ‘otherness’”<sup>9</sup> – or in Golding’s terms, a *cosmic*, rather than a *universal*, source of hope. The overt, discursively vulnerable theology of the early novels evolved into a more sophisticated, discursively invulnerable, negative theology, thus foreshadowing by some twenty-five years trends in Derrida’s writing today. But in the seventies and eighties, at the time of writing *Darkness Visible* and *The Paper Men*, Golding was in the minority, a voice in the wilderness, just where he wanted to be.

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## Notes

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### Prologue: Text and Betrayal

1. Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. III: 1925-1930, ed. Anne Olivier Bell (London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1980), p. 67.
2. Disparity here reflects the differing literary-critical atmospheres within which each author wrote. Golding was exposed to the poststructuralist milieu of the early seventies, specifically to the concepts and vocabulary of theory's "the death of the author." In "La mort de l'auteur" (1968), Roland Barthes declared the absence in text of genesis traceable to the individual writer, proclaimed, in short, the author's death. The demise Golding fears is figurative, but deeply relevant to his art and identity.
3. Vladimir Nabokov, *Pale Fire* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2000). Like Barclay, Nabokov was approached for permission by the Australian academic and writer, Andrew Field, to write his biography; and like Barclay, Nabokov denied the would-be biographer permission to proceed. Nabokov makes for an interesting comparison to Golding regarding available biographies. Granted that each author has received a comparable amount of public attention, the discrepancy between the availability of biographical material on each is surprising. Along with Bill Boyd's well-known biographies on Nabokov, up to fifty books and papers concerned with his personal history can be found in academic libraries (a well maintained Nabokov bibliography can be accessed on line at: <<http://www.libraries.psu.edu/nabokov/bibb.htm>> – last accessed, December 27, 2003). Comparatively few biographical writings exist on Golding, almost all of which are gathered in a single book: *William Golding, the Man and His Books: A Tribute on his 75th Birthday*, ed. Jack Biles (London: Faber & Faber, 1986). Of course, Nabokov died sixteen years before Golding, and it is yet to be seen whether future biographies of Golding will emerge.
4. Judith Carver, Golding's daughter and manager of the Golding estate, kindly sent me some details regarding her father's unpublished journal. In response to a long, creative dry spell suffered in the early seventies, the diary began as a record of Golding's dreams. Miss Carver reports that at this time he became interested in the theories of Carl Jung, and that the dream-records were an experiment in reinvigorating his creative writing. But the habit of general life-writing seems to have taken hold soon after. The Golding diary consists of some 2.4 million words, and runs from October of 1971 to June 18<sup>th</sup> of 1993, the night before his death. Another diary was kept briefly in 1947, and an adolescent journal survives from the 1920s. There are also numerous autobiographical writings still extant

from various periods of Golding's life. Extracts from the journal and information regarding plans for its publication can be found at the official William Golding website, maintained by Miss Carver at <<http://www.william-golding.co.uk>>. Here, Miss Carver writes the following: "His Journals, which he began as a daily discipline in autumn 1971, initially as a record of his dreams, show that the years between these two periods of publication [between Golding's first and last six novels, which were separated by almost twelve years] were anxious and often unhappy. Golding himself set out an account of the start of that period in an essay contained in his diary for 1971 and written I believe in early November of that year. He called it 'History of a Crisis'. By the time he wrote that account, he believed that he had discovered a strategy for renewal and recovery. This process was already bringing him insight, as well as a renewed access to what he described as 'that celebrated imagination of mine.' Golding began recording his dreams in his journal, and almost immediately a succession of startling, colourful and often terrible accounts appear. He tried to interpret those dreams, aided by the ideas of C. G. Jung. Slowly, he began to free himself from despair, and to recover the ability to write once more. The journals began as dream diaries, but they developed into a much more general account of his life, often of his past, his preoccupations, and fears. They also show how he wrote, and give a clear picture of how difficult and fraught with self-doubt and anxiety that process was. But Golding was also capable of detachment: he never lost his own view of himself as a comic figure, and perhaps enjoyed that view." The night before his death, Miss Carver remembers, Golding made an entry in his diary, and played Chopin upon the piano.

5. Italo Calvino, *Mr. Palomar*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), p. 125. The last section of the novel is called "Learning to Be Dead."
6. Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*, ed. Brenda Lyon with Sandra M. Gilbert (London: Penguin Books, 1993), p. 184.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 188.
8. Jorge Luis Borges, "Borges and I", *Jorge Luis Borges: Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 324.
9. William Golding, "Belief and Creativity", *A Moving Target* (London: Faber & Faber, 1982), p. 185.
10. The story of Golding's "discovery" is entertaining, and worth repeating, at least in a footnote. Late in September of 1953, Charles Montieth, an apprentice editor at Faber & Faber, received a manuscript entitled *Strangers from Within* by an unknown writer. The manuscript was bound in cardboard, dog-eared and faded, and had clearly done the rounds in English publishing firms. Before reaching Montieth's desk it was read by an in-house professional reader. Her remarks were



scrawled in green ink at the top of the author's cover page. They read, "Time, The Future. Absurd and uninteresting fantasy about the explosion of an atomic bomb on the colonies and a group of children who land in jungle country near New Guinea. Rubbish and dull. Pointless." This was followed by a large, encircled R, for "reject." Montieth took the manuscript home with him and within a few days fell in love with the story. At the risk of damaging a fledgling reputation in the firm, he promoted to his seniors a work by an unknown who had been rejected by the in-house reader, and, it turned out, by twenty-one previous publishing firms as well. He nonetheless succeeded in pushing the work to press, and on September 17, 1954, *Lord of the Flies* was published. When Golding won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1983, the only person apart from family members to attend him at the ceremonies was Charles Montieth. Golding's rise from anonymity to literary fame was very rapid. Early critical reviews of *Lord of the Flies* were positive, but as Montieth reports, it was other authors who took notice: "E. M. Forster and C. S. Lewis both praised it," and T. S. Eliot declared it "not only a splendid novel but morally and theologically impeccable." Soon there was American distribution. The novel's grass-fire movement through university campuses was unaided by heightened promotional efforts. Then there were translations and inclusion in academic curricula. By this time Golding's pronouncements on the evil indigenous to human nature were being disseminated on a vast, international scale. For a full account, see Charles Montieth, "Stranger from Within," *William Golding, The Man and His Books* (London: Faber & Faber, 1986), p. 63. The story of an author's rise to fame affords more by way of anecdotal pleasure than critical value. But Golding's rise from obscurity as a school teacher in Salisbury to literary canonisation contains in its account an idea important to literary theorists. For it is precisely the notion of the transcendent author, whose death Roland Barthes declared in 1968, that one finds celebrated throughout the entire range of literary success mythology. That the telling of Golding's discovery is a record of actual events is in some ways less important than its power as a mythological narrative form. Charles Montieth functions as the typological Baptist, preparing the way for one greater than himself. And however faint, there was a messianic aura surrounding Golding in the early years of his success. In interviews, lectures, and TV appearances he projected an image of prophetic severity, his face sombre and swollen behind a long grey beard, his speech testifying to the morally diseased nature of human kind. He was not the only English novelist to write theological fiction in the post-war years. Evelyn Waugh, Muriel Spark, Graham Greene, Iris Murdoch, and others, all followed theological itineraries of one sort or another. Yet among these he was relatively successful in evading a perceived alignment with organised religion. Like Carlyle's young Teufelsdröckh, Golding promoted the persona of one "wholly irreligious" yet filled with "religiosity." "I have no time for fringe religion," he asserted in an interview with John Carey, meaning by "fringe religion," traditionally practiced worship. Presumably, he reached instead for a noumenal centre, striving to achieve a primordial closeness and contact with God and spirit. Gradually, however, he became aware that both religious and literary formalities were insufficient to the task.

11. William Golding, "The Hot Gates", *The Hot Gates* (London: Faber & Faber, 1965), p. 19.
12. Ibid., p. 20.
13. William Golding, "Fable", *The Hot Gates* (London: Faber & Faber, 1965), p. 98.
14. William Golding, "A Moving Target", *A Moving Target*, op. cit., p. 170.
15. William Golding, "Belief and Creativity", *A Moving Target*, op. cit., p. 186.
16. Ibid., p. 185.
17. Ibid., p. 186.

### Introduction

1. William Golding, "An Affection for Cathedrals", *A Moving Target*, op. cit., p. 19.
2. Frank Kermode, "Golding's Last Novel", *Pleasing Myself: From Beowulf to Philip Roth* (London: Allen Lane, 2001), p. 248.
3. James Baker, "An Interview with William Golding", *Twentieth Century Literature* (Hempstead, New York: Hofstra University Press, 1982), p. 142.
4. William Golding, *Darkness Visible* (London: Faber & Faber, 1979), p. 246.
5. Frank Kermode, *Pleasing Myself*, op. cit., p. 253.
6. Ibid., p. 254.
7. See William Golding, "Rough Magic", *A Moving Target* (London: Faber & Faber, 1982). Here Golding states, "Let us claim that the more restrictions a man finds on his art—other things such as talent being equal—and the more he has to fight these conventions, use them, outwit them, defeat them as in Judo by allowing them to defeat themselves, the better his art is likely to be. The finest Egyptian statue was carved from basalt, the hardest stone available to them and one they must have found almost impossible to work." p. 126.
8. Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author", *Image Music Text*, trans. and ed. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), pp. 142-8.
9. For a comprehensive discussion of the recalcitrant status of biography and authorship in theory, see Seán Burke, "The Web of Circumstance: Challenges

Posed by the Biographical Question to Contemporary Theory” (printed in pamphlet form at the Institut for Litteratur, Kultur & Medier: Syddansk Universitet, 2001). Can also be viewed online; date accessed: Mar. 2002, <<http://www.danskedigtere.sdu.dk/df-filer/pjce1.PDF>>.

10. Irreconcilability between anti-authorial theory and its practice is apparent in instances of the so-called “anti-autobiography”, such as Roland Barthes’s *Roland Barthes* (1975), or most recently, Terry Eagleton’s *The Gatekeeper* (2001). Each work subverts essentialist assumptions inherent to autobiography by avoiding originary and teleologically structured narratives, by focusing on surface events and the *biographeme*, rather than on emotional-spiritual “growth.” Yet each reveals introspective proclivities, the tendency to take selfhood seriously, to lapse into traditional biographical modes, as if proximity to the fondly beheld subject, the self, could counter-subvert the theoretical mandate. For a reading of the authorial return in Roland Barthes’s *Roland Barthes*, see Seán Burke’s *The Death and Return of the Author*, Chapter II, part i, cited below. Eagleton’s subversive treatment of biography in *The Gatekeeper* appears at times only half-hearted. Here, anti-autobiography begs the question of its own existence. Eagleton’s anti-subjectivist platform, his Catholic and Marxist-derived aversion (as he describes it) for “emotional ostentation,” rests uncomfortably alongside nostalgic modes within his recent writings. His move from theory to literary forms – fiction, drama, and a memoir – and his recent relocation from Oxford to Manchester and Ireland, evince a burgeoning concern for his own origins and identity. By his own admission, his geographical relocation constitutes an attempted *re-racination*, a return to ancestral and working-class roots (see an online interview of Terry Eagleton at “Ciberkiosk,” accessed April 2, 2002, at <<http://www.ciberkiosk.pt/entrevistas/terryeagleton.html>>). In *The Gatekeeper* Eagleton’s occasional adaptation of Wildean stylistics (the art of surface and the profoundly specious) does not disguise his growing interest in life-narrative. His anti-subjectivist platform cannot easily host the nostalgic strain impelling *The Gatekeeper*. The literary theorist painted into the corner of the anti-authorial space is an apt image. Sooner or later, it seems, the theorist makes an abashed exit, leaving prints on the veneer of the selfless text.
11. Seán Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author*, second edition (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998 – first edition, 1992).
12. A recurrent thesis in de Man’s work, but see especially, Paul de Man, “Criticism and Crisis”, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, second edition, ed. Wlad Godzich (London: Methuen, 1983), pp. 3-19.
13. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: the Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), p. 49.
14. Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. Robert Fitzgerald (London: Harvill Press, 1983). Book VI: p. 169.

15. For an account of this lull in Golding's career, and for a strong offering of Golding criticism in general, see Donald Crompton, *A View from the Spire: William Golding's Later Novels* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1985), pp. 9-11.
16. Paul de Man, "Criticism and Crisis", *Blindness and Insight*, op. cit., p. 14.
17. De Man was familiar with a fictional dynamic that would oppose the will-to-intentionality against its impossibility. Georg Lukács viewed this dynamic as integral to the novel form, and de Man explicates his arguments in "Georg Lukács's *Theory of the Novel*." Golding's later fiction illustrates many of Lukács's views. Lukács claimed the novel form arose in the eighteenth century in response to changes in the structure of human consciousness (though his model of this epistemic changeover is not as radical in its totality as that proposed by Michel Foucault). Heightened self-reflection, and a subsequent reflexivity within expressive mediums such as literature, characterises this shift in consciousness. In terms similar to the Lacanian mirror-phase, the new awareness of self was seen to initiate fundamental fissures between selfhood and other, acting to externalise empirical reality (an exterior that had once been *one* with human perception) and to interiorise human experience. Exponents of Germany's *Sturm und Drang* movement, and later theorists of Europe's Romantic period, held a contrary position – not of cosmic alienation, but of infinite communion with the cosmos via one's imaginative capacities. Lukács believed this position was only symptomatic of the new alienated consciousness. Romanticism, he argues, emerged only as a recuperative strategy for the individual divorced from empirical reality, confined to mediumistic contingency and a sense of solipsistic alienation. Lukács opposes Western with Hellenic thought. The Hellenic mind, claims Lukács, thrived in its totalised relationship with the external world. He speaks of the "blessed times... when the fire that burns in our souls is of the same substance as the fire of the stars" (from Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, op. cit., p. 54). Like Lukács – not to mention Heidegger, Freud, and others within a Western intellectual tradition inclined to endowing Greek civilisation with the attributes of origination and presence – Golding saw the Hellenic language as co-extensive to empirical reality: "the Greek language seems to me to lie closest to the object. The words, the Greek words, seem to me to lie nearer, or perhaps even more *in* the thing they stand for, than those of any other language." William Golding, interviewed in *William Golding: The Man and his Books* (London: Faber & Faber, 1986), p. 182.

### Chapter One: *Darkness Visible* – Part 1

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979), pp. 102-103.
2. William Golding, "Utopias and Antiutopias", *A Moving Target*, op. cit., 184.

3. William Golding, *Darkness Visible*, op. cit.. Further page numbers to this text will be given in parentheses.
4. William Golding, "Utopias and Antiutopias", *A Moving Target*, op. cit., pp. 171-184: p. 178.
5. See, for example, Graham Greene's *The End of the Affair* (1951), John Fowles's *The Collector* (1963), or Golding's own *Rites of Passage* (1980).
6. The novelist "must labour at the world of successive events, the world of 'and then,'" says Golding in an essay contemporary to *Darkness Visible*. Time-as-sequential-mechanism finds an analogue in Matty's "mechanical prayers" and his recitations of Old Testament scripture: "56 One golden spoon of ten shekels full of incense: 57 One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year for a burnt offering: 58 One kid of the goats" (55). Among the wrecked machines strewn throughout *Darkness Visible*, time becomes their paragon type, or as Sophy views it, "wave after wave arching, spreading, running down, down, down—" (167). In time Matty's spiritual growth comes into conflict with time itself: "...the change from that year to the next, which might have slipped by in the usual well-oiled manner leaving no trace anywhere but on the calendar, came to creak for Matty like a rusty hinge" (55-56). Golding speaks of the novelist's confinement to time in "Belief and Creativity", *A Moving Target*, op. cit., pp. 195-196.
7. William Golding, *Free Fall* (London: Faber & Faber, 1959), p. 6.
8. William Golding, *The Paper Men* (London: Faber & Faber, 1984), p. 191.
9. William Golding, "Belief and Creativity", *A Moving Target*, op. cit., p. 200.
10. The notion of the novel's *dramatis personae* constituting an authorial polyphony will develop further on. For an account of Bakhtin's dialogic author in relation to the novel see Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoyevski's Poetics*, trans. R. W. Rostel (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1973).
11. Saint Augustine, *Confessions of a Sinner*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), p. 5.
12. William Golding, "Belief and Creativity", *A Moving Target*, op. cit., p. 202.
13. Jorge Luis Borges, "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius", *Labyrinths*, ed. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), pp. 27-43: p. 30.
14. Donald Crompton, *A View From the Spire*, op. cit., p. 68.

15. Kevin McCarron, *The Coincidence of Opposites: William Golding's Later Fiction* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).
2. James Baker, "An Interview with William Golding", op. cit., p. 130.
3. William Golding, "Belief and Creativity", *A Moving Target*, op. cit., p. 196. Further page references from this essay will be given in parentheses.
18. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 43.
19. William Golding, "Belief and Creativity", *A Moving Target*, op. cit., p. 197.
20. William Golding, *The Hot Gates* (London: Faber & Faber, 1965), p. 87.
21. William Golding, *The Paper Men*, op. cit., pp. 14-15.
22. Samuel Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 24-25.
23. Donald Crompton, *A View from the Spire*, op. cit., chapter two.
24. A good source for the history, theology and practice of Manichaeism is Samuel Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China*, op. cit.,
25. See *ibid.*, chapter two.
26. William Golding, "Rough Magic", *A Moving Target*, op. cit., p. 143.

## Chapter Two: *Darkness Visible* – Part 2

1. Virgil, *The Aeneid*, Book VI, trans. Sir John Harrington (1604), from *Virgil in English*, ed. K. W. Gransden (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1996), ll. 264-267; p. 44.
2. The quotation is from Matthew 19.11-12, KJV, and reads in full: "11 But he said unto them, All *men* cannot receive this saying, save *they* to whom it is given. 12 For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from *their* mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." Matty, in fact, balks at performing his own emasculation, and is indirectly pardoned for his unwillingness in the last line of the passage, "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." But then Matty is "made a eunuch of men" – made a eunuch, that is, by Harry Bummer, the Aboriginal met in the countryside.

3. This is the most likely explanation. Elsewhere in the diary Matty says, "Most people do not live into their thirties without knowing what it is to be frightened and most people are afraid of ghosts..." implying that he is not, making it unlikely a ghost caused his rapid retreat from the gravesite.
4. In the essay, "Rough Magic," Golding discusses the problem of dramatising thought-processes, and speaks of lifting and setting down objects as an effective device. He imagines a man sitting at a table: "He is deciding to write a letter. He picks up his spectacles to do so. Finally he decides not to write the letter and puts them down again. Between the picking up and the putting down, there is a long *active* holding of the spectacles and the long interior debate as to yes or no.... Without the spectacles the story would have stood still and the reported interior monologue become an essay." William Golding, "Rough Magic", *A Moving Target* (London: Faber & Faber, 1982), p. 137.
5. Though as Crompton has noted, Matty indicates the biblical origins of his signs when he says, "I thought only me and Ezekiel had been given the way of showing things to those people who can see (as with matchboxes, thorns, shards, and marrying a wicked woman etc.) because it. I cannot say what I mean" (235).
6. Donald Crompton, *A View from the Spire: William Golding's Later Novels* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p. 109.
7. Matthew 18.6, KJV. Ibid., pp. 109-110.
8. Kevin McCarron, *The Coincidence of Opposites: William Golding's Later Fiction* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), p. 39.
9. Revelations 20.1-2, KJV.
10. Revelations 21.23-24, KJV.
11. Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author", *Image Music Text* (London: Fontana Press, 1977), pp. 146-147.
12. Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor touch on several allusions in the swamp scene, including that to the book of Ezekiel: "In the wilderness [Matty] enacts in silence the agony of the psalmist as the waters of affliction close over his head. He submits, shuddering, to a horrible baptism into primeval darkness and slime: but he not only bears witness to a light that shines on, transcending the passage through the underworld – he also proclaims the eternal glory of the wheeled cherubim of Ezekiel and Apocalypse." Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor, *William Golding: A Critical Study* (London: Faber & Faber, 1984), p. 284.
13. William Golding, "Utopias and Antiutopias", *A Moving Target*, op.cit., p. 178.

14. Ezekiel 1.16, LB. The King James Version translates the passage thusly: "and their appearance and their work *was* as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel."
15. Ezekiel 10.17, KJV.
16. A bit more on Matty's name: "His first name, Matthew, became 'Matty'" (17) – "Matty" can be read as a corruption of the gospel writer's name, an instance of scriptural language in a state of denigration (or, conversely, an emancipatory breakdown away from an essentially empty nominalism). His middle name is "Septimus," thus adding to the text's many associations between Matty and the sacred number seven. But just as "Matty" sounds a little like *matter*, "Septimus" harbours decidedly *septic* overtones. These, then, retain the Manichaean parts of Light and Darkness. His mysterious surname, "Windrove," is more exclusively related to Light. Its origin is described thusly: "The name had first jumped into [the hospital official's] mind with the curious effect of having come out of thin air and of being temporary, a thing to be noticed because you were lucky enough to be in the place where it had landed. It was as if you had sat silently in the bushes and – My! – there settled in front of you the rarest of butterflies or birds which had stayed long enough to be seen and had then gone off with an air of going forever, sideways, it might be" (17). If the *surname* refers to one's familial origins, then properly speaking Matty does not have one: Matthew Septimus Windrove, praenomen, nomen, and *numen*. One recalls a passage from Roland Barthes: "In the author's lexicon, will there not always be a word-as-mana, a word whose ardent, complex, ineffable, somehow sacred signification gives the illusion that by this word one might answer for everything? Such a word is neither eccentric nor central; it is motionless and carried, floating, a signifier taking up the place of every signified." In *Darkness Visible* this untenable word is "Windrove." Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Millar (London: Cape, 1977), p. 129.
17. Virgil, *The Aeneid of Virgil*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), l. 148; p. 143.
18. *Ibid.*, ll. 176-182; p. 143.
19. William Golding, "Intimate Relations", *A Moving Target*, op. cit., p. 105.
20. Whether Matty's prediction that the apocalypse will occur on 6/6/66 is mistaken or not is unclear. The apocalypse does not occur; the warning signs Matty gives in Greenfield seem to have been for nothing (he walks the streets with "666" written in blood on his hat). But the spirits explain: "Judgement is not the simple thing you think. The number did much good not only in the town but as far afield as Camborne and Launeston", p. 101.
21. William Golding, *A Moving Target*, op. cit., p. 170.



22. C. H. Whitely, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (London: Methuen, 1950). I am referring to a passage in "Phenomenalism: its Grounds and Difficulties", section 56: "Surely, the room cannot be warmed by my visual sense-datum of a fire! Still less can it be warmed by the possibility of a visual sense-datum of a fire during my absence, when I am not looking at the fire but the fire gets warmed all the same. When we all sit round the table and sense sense-data very similar in shape, size, and colour, what is the explanation of this fact, if not that there is an independent table which is the common cause of all our similar sense-data? Berkeley himself admits, or rather insists, that an 'idea' is 'inert,' and can *do* nothing."
23. The earliest mention of Golding's diary in his published writings is in "Egypt from my Outside" (1977). Here he states he has kept his journal for "a dozen years," putting the start-date at around 1965. Judith Carver, however, cites 1971 as the inaugural year of her father's main diary. Regardless, Golding's description of the diary in "Egypt from my Outside" is worth quoting in full, as it describes the diary's contents and production, even its physical attributes – and reads as a justification for the practice of diary writing: "The journal I took with me [to Egypt] is one I have added to, volume after volume, for a dozen years. It is one of those refill pads with holes at the side of the page so that when it is full you can clip it into a file. Years of travel have led me to this choice. The pad is pliable and will go into any luggage, stuffed in. The main problem is to find always a good place to rest it in a good light. The trick with a journal is immediacy. Of course there's nowhere near enough time to record everything that happens; but it is astonishing what memories can be reclaimed by a few notes, in total recall – only those notes must be made quickly. There's a constant battle going on between tiredness, abundance and a natural desire to write well, to be, shall I say, vivid and eloquent. Sometimes, if I wake early, even before first light, I get up and do the journal. Which day is that, then, you may ask? Things do get a bit mixed. Or sometimes, when stuck, as for example on a ship, bored to distraction as I am by sea travel, there are many hours to spare and an entry in the journal can widen into an essay, more or less. Then another crowded day may have next to nothing in it except a name and address, the time of an invitation to dinner, and a single sentence that I fondly suppose to be an epigram worth retaining. Sometimes I record ideas for writing but they seldom come to anything. At home my journal might have a record of what is happening in the water garden, or the local scandal. I'm trying to explain what a ragbag of a thing my journal is. If you sow through all that a steady record of my dreams – a record on which some of my psychological or psychiatric friends seem eager to lay their hands – you can see that its constituents vary from something with a touch of Jennifer's diary about it to the inside of a blood pudding. I am interested also, to find myself justifying the wide spacing of my novels by the thought that all the time I am writing these millions of words, even though most of them are useless and few meant for permanence. I feel guilty if I miss a day and that seldom, or almost never happens, sick or well, rain or shine.... I ought to add that the only

person who has read what I hope are the more entertaining bits is my wife, not at her insistence but at mine, since pushed out of sight in any writer, no matter how austere a front he presents to others, is the desire for someone to read what he has written." William Golding, "Egypt From My Outside", *A Moving Target* (London: Faber & Faber, 1982), pp. 57-58.

24. I am indebted to Judith Carver, Golding's daughter and head of the Golding Estate, for information regarding the diary. She reports that plans are underway for the publication of Golding's journal, with a tentative release date of 2005. Meanwhile, excerpts of the journal are posted at the official Golding website: date accessed, June 7, 2003, <[http://www.william-golding.co.uk/f\\_journals.html](http://www.william-golding.co.uk/f_journals.html)>.
25. William Golding, "Intimate Relations", *A Moving Target*, op. cit., pp. 123-124.
26. Excerpt from the diary of Jimmy Mason, quoted in Virginia Tiger, *William Golding: The Dark Fields of Discovery* (London: Marion Boyars, 1976), p. 179.
27. William Golding, "The Hot Gates", *The Hot Gates: and Other Occasional Pieces* (London: Faber & Faber, 1965), pp. 19-20. Golding's sense of his own occasional, semi-oracular contact with the past is expressed in several essays, including "Digging for Pictures": "I like to pick through the ashcans of the Iron Age and guess how life went on. Digging, I lay my hand on things. I discover an immediacy which disappears when the find becomes official and is displayed behind glass.... for those few moments, obscurely and indefinably, you can feel a connection with the past." William Golding, "Digging for Pictures," *The Hot Gates*, op. cit., p. 66.
28. William Golding, "Intimate Relations", *William Golding: A Moving Target*, op. cit., pp. 104-124; p. 124.
29. Golding began his own diary at approximately the same time Matty is said to begin his. It is interesting that the time separating Matty's two diary segments is also that separating *Darkness Visible* (1979) from Golding's previous novel, *The Pyramid* (1967). If the hiatus in Golding's career is given symbolic weight, as the absent centre of the *oeuvre*, then the two sections of Matty's diary are also separated by void, or specifically, by the narrative of Sophy, chief exponent of darkness and negated creativity.
30. William Golding, "Belief and Creativity", *A Moving Target*, op. cit., p. 196.
31. Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author", *Image Music Text*, op. cit., p. 146.

### Chapter Three: *The Paper Men*

1. Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text", *Image Music Text*, op. cit., p. 161.
2. George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (London: Penguin Books, 1989), p. 152.
3. Golding comments on the myth of artistic alterity and freedom (a myth he held dear and never fully gave up) in "A Moving Target." Here he notes the significance of Dylan Thomas to readers and academics in the early sixties: "What stories we heard! What Bohemianism! What a picture of the wild man, the artist, destroyed as a kind of Christ-substitute hung on the cross of his own art. It was Villonesque, that picture of a man who had died in the poetic sense so that we might have and respect poetry! But if one enquired further, insisted a bit, the picture was not so clear. It was always a story up the road, from somewhere else. At the next campus they say he did such and such—and look! Here is the very hole his cigarette burnt in our counterpane! But here, here where we are? Oh no! Curiously enough, here he had behaved well, had asked to be allowed to sleep, yes, all things considered, he behaved very well, rather dully in fact, like a man who has a schedule to keep. I began to understand then the deep need we feel for the sacrifice, for the creator rather than the critic.... The truth is that in the West we fear the wells of creativity are running dry and we may be right." William Golding, "A Moving Target", *A Moving Target*, op. cit., pp. 155-156.
4. Writers in *The Paper Men* are exclusively male. The uni-sexuality of the writing-trade hints at the non-generative trafficking between writers and their texts. It also reflects biases in Golding's thinking.
5. William Golding, *The Paper Men* (London: Faber & Faber, 1984), p. 34. Further page references will be given in parentheses.
6. There are thinly veiled hints that Barclay experimented with homosexuality in the past. In Greece he meets an old acquaintance, the gay writer, "Johnny." Barclay gives him money – "Yes, yes. The same as last time" – for unspecified reasons; hush money presumably. Johnny later remarks that Wilf was once a "wee bit experimental" (107).
7. Though it was the French publication of "La mort de l'auteur" that led to the essay's instatement as a classic text, while the first version appearing in the American magazine, *Aspen*, garnered little notice. For more information on the history of "The Death of the Author," see Molly Nesbit, "What was an Author?", *Yale French Studies*, 73 (1987), pp. 229-57. All references to "The Death of the Author" will be made to Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author", *Image Music Text*, ed. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), pp. 42-48.
8. James R. Baker, "An Interview with William Golding", *Twentieth Century*

*Literature*, Vol. 28, Summer, 1982 (Hempstead: Hofstra University Press, 1982), p. 162.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 156. Baker presses the matter despite Golding's exasperation, making for a very entertaining interview: "But you have the reputation, have always had the reputation, of being an individualist, autonomous, independent; hermetic would be going too far.  
Golding: I'd like to keep that in too.  
Baker: You want to keep in the hermetic?  
Golding: Yes." p. 156.  
Further on Baker is split between appeasing the author and pressing his point: "You are a man who writes out of his own resources, almost entirely so, and yet what you write is often fable or myth. And the perceptions that you have of the contemporary world are often shared by your contemporaries.  
Golding: I know, I know. Oh, it's all legitimate. I'm not complaining about literary history or the genealogical literary investigation, except in so far as I have to answer the questions. This is pure selfishness on my part. There are things I'd sooner talk about, but here we are doing it", pp. 156-157.
11. William Golding, "A Moving Target", *A Moving Target*, op. cit., p. 155.
12. These dates are not confirmed by the text, but are fair assumptions, I think. The novel spans about 22 years, and at its close one assumes that Barclay's present tense is also Golding's, i.e., 1983, or '84. This corresponds with the fact that Barclay's meeting with Tucker in the opening scene occurs on his fiftieth birthday. Golding turned fifty in 1961.
13. Of Tucker's sweater Barclay writes, "I thought for moment he was being defiant about that dustbin he'd rummaged through so many years ago—well, seven long years ago." It is unclear why Barclay specifies "seven" years, for he is mistaken. Barclay celebrates his fiftieth birthday on the night of Tucker's rummaging. At the time of the above statement Barclay tells Mary Lou he has just turned sixty. Tucker's rummaging of the dustbin occurred ten years prior.
14. The humour here is difficult. "Ashcan" finds no usage in North America. Those upon the Nebraskan campus, where Tucker's sweater was presumably produced, would not grasp the pun as readily as Barclay does.
15. William Golding, *Darkness Visible*, op. cit., pp. 47-48.
16. *The Paper Men* contains a motif of alcoholism as a distancing from the divine, or that which is only overcome by God's grace. Barclay evokes Plato often, and it is interesting to note in this context Plato's belief that prophecy is a function of the liver. A passage from *Timaeus* seems especially relevant to *The Paper Men*: "It is

not the business of any man, so long as he is in an abnormal state, to interpret his own visions and utterances.... Hence the custom of setting up spokesmen to pronounce judgments on inspired prophecies; they are sometimes called prophets by those who are ignorant that they are in fact not prophets, but expounders of riddling oracles and visions, and so most exactly called spokesmen of those who prophesy. Such then, is the nature and position of the liver, which enables it to carry out its function of prophecy. So long as anyone is alive, the liver gives comparatively clear indications, but after death it becomes blind and its signs too obscure to convey any clear meaning." Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, trans. Desmond Lee (London: Penguin Books, 1977), pp. 99-100.

17. "The ice crowns of the mountain were a-glitter. They welcomed the sun. There was a sudden and tremendous noise that set the hyenas shivering back to the cliff. It was a noise that engulfed the water noises, rolled along the mountains, boomed from cliff to cliff and spread in a tangle of vibrations over the sunny forests and out towards the sea." William Golding, *The Inheritors* (London: Faber & Faber, 1957), p. 222.
4. William Golding, "Belief and Creativity", *ibid.*, p. 189.
5. William Golding, *Darkness Visible*, *op. cit.*, pp. 237-238.
6. Italo Calvino, *Mr. Palomar*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), pp. 125-126.
7. Italo Calvino, *Marcovaldo, or The Seasons in the City*, trans. William Weaver (London: Vintage, 2001), pp. 120-121.
8. Italo Calvino, *Mr. Palomar*, *op. cit.*, p. 121.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

### Conclusion

1. William Golding, "Belief and Creativity", *A Moving Target*, *op. cit.*, p. 201.
2. Jacques Derrida interviewed in *life.after.theory*, ed. Michael Payne and John Schad (New York: Continuum, 2003), p. 8.
3. Toril Moi interviewed in *life.after.theory*, *op. cit.*, p. 166.
4. Christopher Norris interviewed in *life.after.theory*, *op. cit.*, p. 124. For an example of Norris's recent interest in truth and literature see Christopher Norris, *Truth*

*Matters: Realism, Anti-Realism and Response Dependence* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002).

5. Not all theorists mentioned here condone recent interest in religious interpretations of deconstruction. Despite Norris's return to truth values in literature, he disapproves of religious encroachments into theory: "...this whole revival of religious or theological interest among literary theorists is something that I find pretty hard to take. When people are killing each other all over the world in the name of this or that half-baked fanatical creed it is the last thing we need to have literary intellectuals egging them on from the sidelines." *Ibid.*, p. 129.
6. *Ibid.*, John Schad, p. 125.
7. Derrida recently expressed concern regarding the persistent notion of deconstruction as nihilistic. He was unusually vehement in a recent interview when asked what was the most common misconception of his work: "That I'm a skeptical nihilist who doesn't believe in anything, who thinks nothing has meaning, and text has no meaning. That's stupid and utterly wrong, and only people who don't read me say this. It's a misunderstanding of my work that began 35 years ago, and it's difficult to destroy. I never said everything is linguistic and that we're enclosed in language." Jacques Derrida, "The Three Ages of Jacques Derrida", interview with Kristine McKenna, *LA Weekly* November 8 – 14, 2002.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
9. Christopher Norris, *life.after.theory*, op. cit., p. 129.

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